

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

February 17, 2022

Strong Recommendations from NWHU based on local COVID-19 statistics

As some provincial COVID-19 restrictions get loosened today, Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) strongly recommends that local businesses, organizations, and residents follow enhanced measures while case numbers and hospitalizations remain high.

“Our region’s COVID-19 percent positivity rates and hospitalizations are not decreasing like most of the province. We have the highest case rate per 100,000 in Ontario, nearly four times higher than the provincial rate, and are seeing increases in the trending data,” says Dr. Kit Young Hoon, Medical Officer of Health at NWHU. “In addition, recently we have seen a sudden increase in the number of people hospitalized for COVID-19 in our area, and we must do more to protect ourselves and those around us,” says Dr. Young Hoon.

As such, Dr. Young Hoon strongly recommends the following:

- Keep social gatherings limited to a maximum of 10 people indoors and 25 people outdoors;
- All indoor public settings limited to the number of people who are able to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person to a maximum capacity of 50%;
- Be vigilant in continuing to practice all prevention measures, including physical distancing, daily screening, staying home when feeling unwell, and wearing a mask properly when in indoor public settings and when physical distancing is challenging; and
- Getting a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine as it significantly reduces the chance of infection from the Omicron variant.

Public health officials note that spread has occurred in the region through informal social gatherings and residents are urged to limit the number of guests, gather outdoors if possible, and to assess the risk of the activity before making plans. Using a [risk calculator](#) can help to inform decisions.

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“The above recommendations have been issued to keep our region’s most vulnerable residents protected. Older adults, unvaccinated people, and immunocompromised individuals are particularly at a higher risk of severe outcomes from a COVID-19 infection. I am hopeful that these enhanced prevention practices will allow our local COVID-19 rates to decrease. We will continue to monitor data and revisit the recommendations in two weeks,” says Dr. Young Hoon.

For information on our region’s COVID-19 data, visit www.nwhu.on.ca/covid19.

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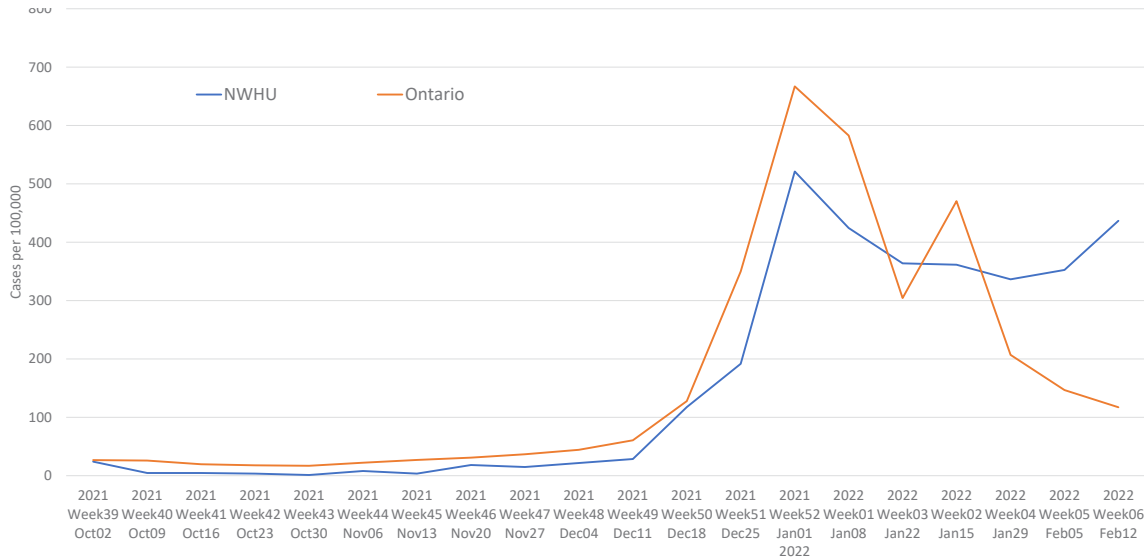
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Additional Information:

Although most parts of Ontario are seeing a steady decline in COVID-19 positivity rates and hospitalizations, the NWHU region is seeing an increase. The region's 7-day positive case rate is 436.8 per 100,000 while Ontario as a whole sits at 117.1 per 100,000.

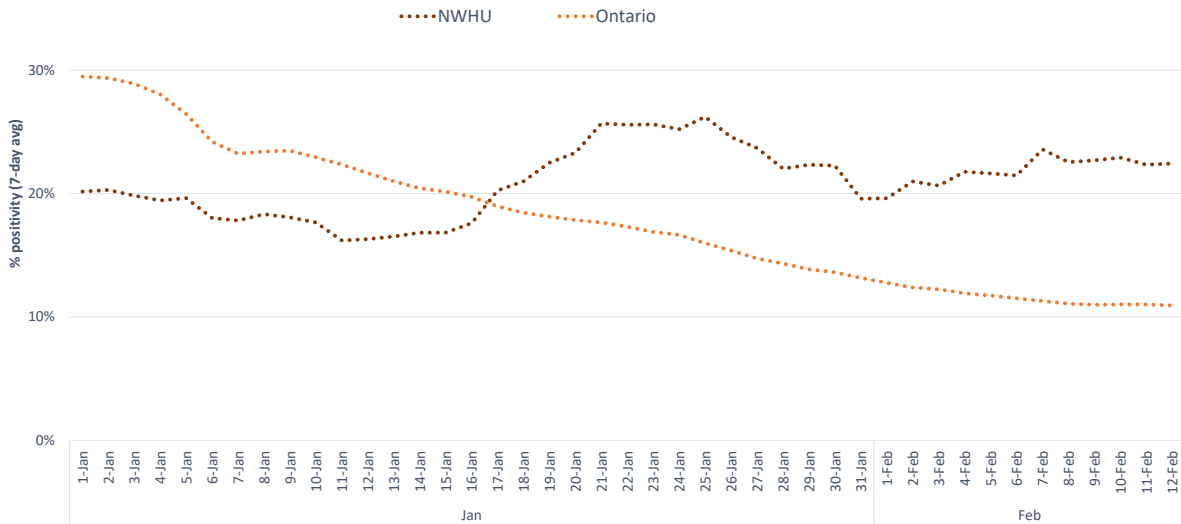
COVID-19 confirmed cases per 100,000 per week, NWHU and Ontario



Data Source: Capacity Planning and Analytics Division. Visual Analytics Hub. Date Extracted: February 14, 2022

NWHU's 7-day average percent positivity rate is significantly higher than the province, which has been steady at 22% vs the province's continually declining rate, currently sitting at 11%.

7-day average percent positivity, NWHU and Ontario



Data Source: Capacity Planning and Analytics Division. Visual Analytics Hub. Date Extracted: February 14, 2022