

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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Local COVID-19 update

As a 6th wave of COVID-19 begins in the province, local case numbers are increasing in many of our communities. Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) notes that the virus, including the BA 2 variant, is circulating in the region. Public health officials urge residents to stay home and isolate if they are feeling unwell.

Due to eligibility criteria for PCR testing, NWHU says that many people test positive on Rapid Antigen Tests, which are not captured in reporting, indicating that the number of people in our region with COVID-19 is much higher than the data shows. “It is likely that when interacting in public settings, people will be exposed to the virus. The risk of this happening will go up and down as we experience waves of illness, but the risk will still be there. I strongly recommend wearing a mask when in enclosed public settings to prevent the spread of COVID-19,” says Dr. Kit Young Hoon, Medical Officer of Health at NWHU.

The region has also seen a small increase in hospitalizations over the past week, something Dr. Young Hoon is monitoring closely. “A key focus of our current pandemic response efforts is preventing spread of the virus within high-risk settings. By protecting the most vulnerable populations, we help prevent local health care facilities from becoming overwhelmed with COVID-19 cases,” she says.

There are some populations who are at a higher risk of severe infection, and they may want to remain cautious and take steps to protect themselves, especially as the 6th wave begins. “Staying home when you are unwell, staying up to date on your COVID-19 vaccinations, continuing to wear a mask in public settings, and limiting the number of people you come into contact with can help lower the chances of spreading the illness or getting infected,” says Dr. Young Hoon.

Lastly, NWHU urges kindness as we adjust to live with the virus. Many businesses and agencies, including hospitals are experiencing staffing shortages. This means many essential workers are putting in overtime and extra shifts because their coworkers are ill. Showing compassion, patience and kindness can go a long way during these challenging times.

For more information about COVID-19, including vaccinations, treatment, or isolation advice, visit www.nwhu.on.ca/covid19.

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