



14 June 2021

## **Public Health Alert COVID-19 – Variants of Concern, Importance of Vaccination, Public Health Measures**

Dear Chief and Health Director:

As you are aware, COVID-19 Variants of Concern (VOCs) have been circulating in Ontario and the Alpha variant (also known as the variant first identified in the United Kingdom) was responsible for the “third wave” that Ontario experienced over the winter and early spring. Unfortunately we are still seeing outbreaks in some communities that were impacted late by this wave.

We now know that the Delta variant (also known as the variant that was first identified in India) has been confirmed in all health units in Ontario. This variant is currently responsible for over 25% of cases in one of the southern ON health units. It is predicted that over the summer the Delta variant will become the dominant variant of COVID-19 in ON.

Research is continuing into the Delta variant, but we have learned that it is even more transmissible than the Alpha variant, and that 2 doses of vaccine provide much more protection than one dose.

We are writing to inform you of this evolving information and to emphasize the importance of continuing vaccination efforts, especially ensuring that your community members do get vaccinated, and that they get that critical second dose.

### Continuing to Follow Public Health Measures

**Children have not yet been fully vaccinated – they are still susceptible to COVID-19, and we have seen many children affected in some communities. Although most children recover easily and quickly from COVID-19, some can have severe disease.**

Please continue to advise your residents to practice public health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 **even if they have been vaccinated:**

- If there are clusters or outbreaks in a community people should not visit other people’s homes and limit interactions with others as much as possible to prevent spread
- PERSONS WITH ANY SYMPTOMS should get tested immediately and stay away from others as much as possible
- Persons waiting for test results should self-isolate until test results are known and they are notified by their health care provider about next steps
- Wear a well-fitting 3-ply mask and practice physical distancing of 2-metres when out of your home to get essential supplies, groceries, medications, etc.
- Continue to wash hands often and practice good hygiene
- Cover your cough or sneeze

This advice is intended to supplement, not replace, the advice of your local public health unit.

Communities continue to work hard to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Thank you for all of your continuing efforts in promoting vaccinations and public health measures.

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