

Statement from the Chief Medical Officer of Health

March 30, 2020 12:40 P.M.

TORONTO — Today, Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health, issued the following statement in response to COVID-19:

"The Government of Ontario continues to take decisive action to respond to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) to help contain its spread and to protect the public. This has involved some unprecedented measures, and I know many of you continue to undertake great efforts to protect your families, friends, neighbours, clients and patients, and communities.

However, we must do more.

Everyone has a role to play in reducing the risk of spreading COVID-19 - there is no option for anyone to opt out.

The lives of many Ontarians, especially our community's most vulnerable citizens, is in your hands and will depend on your actions over the coming days and weeks.

I strongly recommend you and other members of your household stay home except for essential reasons, such as to:

- Access health care services;
- Shop for groceries;
- Pick-up medication at the pharmacy;
- Walk pets when required; and
- Support vulnerable community members with meeting the above needs.

To the fullest extent possible, you should also limit the number of these essential trips.

However, when you are out in public you must adhere to physical distancing by reducing your exposure to other people outside of your household by keeping two metres from other people.

Given the greater risk of severe outcomes to Ontarians who are elderly, I am also strongly recommending that individuals over 70 years of age self-isolate. This means only leaving home or seeing other people for essential reasons. Where possible, you should seek services over the phone or internet or ask for help from friends, family or neighbours with essential errands. This also applies to individuals who have compromised immune systems and/or underlying medical conditions.

As we have been saying repeatedly, it is critically important to wash your hands regularly (or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available), practice proper cough and sneeze etiquette, and avoid direct contact when greeting people.

In addition, as previously communicated and mandated by the federal government, all individuals who are returning from travel outside of Canada must self-isolate for 14 days when they return. You must not go to work, grocery stores or on walks. You should also monitor yourself for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days after returning and contact your primary care provider or Telehealth Ontario (1-866-797-0000) if you experience symptoms of COVID-19.

I also ask that family members, individuals, neighbours, and services in our communities look at how they can support others by taking these necessary actions. This would allow seniors, other at-risk populations, and returning travellers to remain at home.

The government is continuing to support all of the dedicated health care providers and front-line workers who are focused on keeping Ontarians healthy and safe.

We need to remember that we all have an obligation to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 to our families, friends, neighbours, and communities. Please do not underestimate the impact that your actions will have in helping to stop the spread of this virus.

For more information on COVID-19, including the current status of the outbreak, the online [self-assessment tool](#) to help determine how to seek further care, how Ontario is responding, and how to self isolate, please visit [Ontario's COVID-19 web page](#).

Thank you for your ongoing action and commitment."

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