



## MEDIA RELEASE

**Friday, March 18, 2022, Peterborough**

### **Peterborough Public Health Recommends Masking Up for a Few More Weeks to Protect Others**

Peterborough Public Health strongly recommends local residents continue wearing masks after the provincial masking mandate ends on March 21 until COVID-19 transmission levels decline.

“We recommend wearing a mask while indoors and around others for at least a few more weeks until we better understand the context of COVID-19 transmission in our region,” said Dr. Thomas Piggott, Medical Officer of Health.

“There are still thousands of local residents who remain at risk of serious disease if they get infected, and only 55% of eligible area residents are fully vaccinated with all three doses of COVID-19 vaccine.”

Dr. Piggott explained that the latest local wastewater data indicates a recent increase in transmission in the Peterborough Public Health region, and it is expected to continue to fluctuate. While levels have decreased significantly since the Omicron peak in January, they are at a plateau equal to peak transmission levels of past COVID-19 waves. According to the [Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table](#), wastewater data from the GTA, Central East and Eastern regions are also showing recent increases.

“Wearing a mask shouldn’t be thought of as an all or nothing, it’s really about decreasing risk,” said Dr. Piggott, adding, “I would still rather see someone wear a mask just in their highest-risk interactions, such as around large groups, indoors, or poorly ventilated areas - than not at all.”

Those who are most at risk of severe illness from COVID-19 are the elderly, immunocompromised and medically-at-risk. At-risk health conditions include diabetes, obesity, heart disease, kidney disease, liver disease, cerebral palsy, intellectual disability of any severity, sickle cell disease, receiving active cancer treatment, solid organ or stem cell transplant recipients.

Peterborough Public Health reminds residents that the provincial masking mandate remains in effect for public transit, healthcare settings, long term care homes and congregate care settings. Masks are also required at COVID-19 vaccination clinics. [Provincial guidance](#) also requires those recovering from COVID-19 infection and those who are close contacts (but not required to self-isolate) to wear a mask when outside the home, including in school and childcare (except for those under two years old). In addition, current federal travel rules according to <https://travel.gc.ca/travel-covid/travel-restrictions/exemptions> require travellers to wear a mask for 14 days in public settings upon their return from international travel.

Dr. Piggott also noted it will always be important to keep masks on hand, as public health guidance may require wearing masks again in the future depending on the evolving context of the pandemic.

“Masking remains the second-most effective way after getting the vaccine of reducing transmission without any harms beyond the mild discomfort/inconvenience. It is well worth it to protect ourselves and those more vulnerable around us.”

Peterborough Public Health emphasizes layering on multiple strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19 including:

- Make sure you’re fully vaccinated with three doses of COVID-19 vaccine, or four doses if you’re immunocompromised,
- Wear a mask,
- Ensure the spaces you’re in, especially without a mask, are well ventilated. See PPH for a fact sheet.
- Stay home when sick,
- Complete a rapid-antigen test if symptoms appear, and record them in a PPH surveillance survey.
- Wash hands regularly,
- Maintain physical distance.

For more information, please visit [www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca/masks](http://www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca/masks).

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