



PRESS STATEMENT

The Minister of Health

The Honourable Kim N. Wilson, JP, MP

Monday 23rd November 2020, 5.45pm

at Global House

Good Afternoon,

Given the increase in new cases over the past few days and understandable concern in the community, I wanted to address you all today to provide an update and answer any questions that you may have.

There were 2044 test results received by the Ministry of Health from 20-22 November 2020, and eight were positive for COVID-19. It should be noted that this includes the cases reported on Saturday/Sunday.

One of the new cases is classified as imported with details as follows:

- 1 non-resident who arrived on AC 942 from Toronto on 6 November 2020 who tested positive on their day 14 test and had been in quarantine as a close contact of a known case identified upon arrival from the same flight.

The remaining seven new cases had no link to travel:

One of the new cases is classified as local transmission with known contact being a resident who had close contact in a social setting with a known case currently under investigation.

The remaining 6 new cases are related to a workplace setting with details as follows:

- 2 residents currently classified as under investigation and linked by close contact in a workplace setting (**these were the two identified over the weekend**)
- 4 residents classified as local transmission with known contact having had close contact in the same workplace setting as the 2 cases under investigation

Bermuda now has 235 total confirmed positive cases. Their status is as follows:

- there are 22 active cases, who are
- all under public health monitoring, and
- none are hospitalized or in critical care;
- a total of 204 have recovered, and
- the total deceased remains 9.

The average age of all of our confirmed positive cases is 53 years and the age range of all of our positive cases is from 7 to 101 years.

The average age of all deceased cases is 74 years and the age range is 57 to 91 years.

The source of all cases is as follows:

- 114 are Imported
- 97 are Local transmission, with known contact/source
- 21 are Local transmission with an unknown contact/source, and
- 3 are under investigation

As a reminder, persons remain 'under investigation' until a linkage is found or up to 28 days - whichever is longest. If no linkage is found, these persons will move to local transmission with unknown contact/source.

The seven-day average of our real time reproduction number is less than 1.

Bermuda's current country status is "Sporadic Cases" but is likely to change to "Clusters of Cases". This is because some of our active cases are within well-defined clusters that have not been directly linked to imported cases.

With the recent uptick in cases and foreseeable change in country status, I would like to re-emphasise the crucial importance of following public health protocols – wear your mask, practice physical distancing, cover your cough, stay home if you're sick and avoid the 3 Cs: closed spaces, crowded spaces and close-contact settings. Imagine that everyone outside of your household is a potentially incubating carrier of COVID-19 – Would you shake their hand? Would you share a meal with them in a tight space with little ventilation?

I know that we are all suffering from pandemic fatigue but we must not give up now – with so much at stake. We have given up so much for so many months – and we are so close, with a vaccine in sight. We need to hang in there a while longer. The vaccine is not here yet and if we are not careful we could be over-run with COVID-19 before it even gets here.

The current uptick in cases this month has taught us several things:

Firstly, more focus is needed with respect to ‘education bubbles’ – Even if a school class is separated from another, it does not count as a bubble if they all play together at lunchtime, for example.

Secondly, additional rigor is needed with respect to workplace guidance.

There is an abundance of workplace-specific guidance on the Government website coronavirus.gov.bm but I will provide you with a few key points now as it relates to office environments:

- Remote working should be encouraged, if possible;
- Consider using team 'bubbles' for office staff. (i.e. one week half of the staff are in the office; the next week the other half are in);
- Encourage employees to stay home if unwell;
- Encourage employees to wash hands or use hand sanitizer often;
- Employees should work six feet from others or three feet if wearing masks;
- Staff should hold virtual meetings when possible. Where remote meetings are not possible, staff must be six feet from others and no more than 10 persons in a meeting;
- Employers should review options for increasing ventilation - consider air purifiers, for example;
- Employers should also review how persons enter and leave the work space. *How can you reduce the overlap of employees and increase disinfection?*
- Where located in a multi-office building, identify designated entry and exit points to minimize worker contact while moving through the worksite;

- Employees should wear a mask whenever moving around the office;
- Management and workplace leaders need to know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, and not allow those with symptoms remain in the workplace;
- And, finally, consult the Return to Work Recommendations for Businesses at coronavirus.gov.bm. There is special guidance for returning to work after travel.

All workplaces, schools, churches, clubs, bars, restaurants – everyone! – must review their COVID-19 policies to ensure they are strictly in accordance with public health protocols. This includes recording the names and contact details for all patrons.

Members of the public can report infractions by calling 211.

The Ministry of Health is currently reviewing its guidelines to see if they need to be adjusted in light of the uptick in new cases.

Finally, if you are unwell with COVID-19 symptoms, call your doctor and get tested. It is important that you do not turn up to your doctor's office without first calling ahead. Also, please have your ID with you when getting tested.

Thank You...and see you here this time tomorrow.