



PRESS STATEMENT

The Minister of Health

The Honourable Kim N. Wilson, JP, MP

Tuesday 24th November 2020, 5.45pm

at Global House

Good Afternoon,

There were 808 test results received by the Ministry of Health yesterday (23 November 2020), and four were positive for COVID-19.

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

- 1 resident who arrived on DL 584 from Atlanta on 22 November 2020 who tested positive on their arrival test, having not had a pre-test.

The additional three cases are classified as local transmission with known contact with details as follows:

- 1 resident having had close contact in the same household as a case under investigation linked to a workplace
- 2 residents having had close contact in the same household as a known case linked to the same workplace

Bermuda now has 239 total confirmed positive cases. Their status is as follows:

- there are 25 active cases, who are
- all under public health monitoring, and
- none are hospitalized or in critical care;
- a total of 205 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 0 to 101 years.

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

Overall, 48% of cases were Black, 45% White and 7% other/unknown.

The source of all cases is as follows:

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

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

Bermuda's current country status is now "Cluster of Cases".

With the recent uptick in local COVID-19 cases, there have been some questions raised about what constitutes a 'close contact'. I will try and provide some clarity around that point for you now...

When a positive case of COVID-19 is identified in the community, the Ministry of Health begin a process known as

'Contact Tracing' to determine who that person may have been in contact with and may have infected. A person can be either a 'close contact' or a 'casual contact'.

'Close contact' means:

- Spending more than 15 minutes of face-to-face contact within six feet of an infected person in any setting;
- Living in the same house or shared accommodation as an infected person;
- Sitting within 2 seats of an infected person, in any direction, on an airplane.

'Casual contact' means:

- Spending less than 15 minutes of face-to-face contact within six feet of an infected person in any setting;
- Being in the same room as with an infected person for less than 2 hours;
- Being on an airplane with an infected person but not sitting near them.

Spending more than 2 hours in a closed space (such as an office of classroom) with an infected person can be either a close contact or a casual contact, depending on the circumstances. Whether it is classified as 'casual' or 'close' contact will depend on the size of the room and other factors. Health officials will let you know if you are at risk or not.

If you are a close contact of a case you must complete a 14 day quarantine. Remember that a breach in quarantine is an offence.

During these 14 days of quarantine, a case manager will phone you to monitor any symptoms you may have. If you develop any symptoms of coronavirus, call your GP. You'll find out if you are a close contact because you will be notified by the Ministry of Health contact tracing team.

If you are a casual contact you should make sure you know the symptoms of coronavirus and be aware that you may develop them. You do not need to restrict your movement. If you develop symptoms of coronavirus, you will need to self-isolate and phone your GP straight away to get a test for coronavirus.

Persons who are a close contact should follow the guidance given to them individually by the Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit.

If you call the surveillance team and cannot get through immediately and are waiting a call-back, please be patient as there are many contacts to be traced and persons with the closest contacts will be contacted first.

Also, if there is an outbreak in your place of work or business, remember that if you and your staff have been compliant, as is required by policy (wearing a mask correctly at all times, washing hands and maintaining physical distancing where possible) your risk of infection from that outbreak will be significantly diminished. If you work in a smaller team in places where physical distancing is not possible or where staff travel together, you should also wear a mask. These basic practices protect us all every day and are in place to keep you safe.

None of us can be complacent at this time. Without the

precautions we all know – mask wearing, physical distancing and hand-washing – one case can easily multiply and spread.

What contact tracing has taught us about the current increase in positive cases is that we are not staying within a small, defined ‘bubble’ at all times. We need to work much harder to limit our interactions with family and friends.

The Ministry advises that you reduce your bubble sizes now - choose only one or two other households to socialize with for the next few weeks. It is particularly easy to be casual in the workplace, and relax around colleagues as you would around your family. Do not do this.

As we enter the holiday season – typically a time when family and friends get together – we must be more mindful than ever about following these public health guidelines.

Therefore, I would like to restate a reminder to travellers which I issued in a press release last week: All travellers – including returning students – are subject to mobile quarantine

restrictions on their movements and activities, until they receive a negative Day 14 COVID-19 test result.

Therefore all travellers should:

- Wear a mask at all times when in the company of others.
- Avoid indoor spaces.
- Not attend large family gatherings.

In particular, returning students should be careful of mixing with local students and family members while on island, prior to their negative Day 14 COVID-19 test result.

Similarly, those travelling for business should take the necessary precautions when returning and interacting with family and friends.

U.S. Epidemiologists have observed that the way most people become infected in the U.S. may be shifting. In the summer, a large driver of infections was young people socializing and bringing the virus home to their parents and relatives. Now, family and social gatherings are assuming a much more prominent role.

If you will be hosting or attending a gathering during the holiday season that brings people who live in different households together please listen to the following tips, as recommended by the CDC:

- Limit the number of attendees as much as possible to allow people from different households to remain at least 6 feet apart at all times. Guests should avoid direct contact, including handshakes and hugs, with others not from their household.
- Host outdoor rather than indoor gatherings as much as possible.
- Avoid holding gatherings in crowded, poorly ventilated spaces with persons who are not in your household.
- Increase ventilation by opening windows and doors.
- Require guests to wear masks. At gatherings that include persons of different households, everyone should always wear a mask that covers both the mouth and nose, except when eating or drinking.
- Encourage attendees to wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are

not readily available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

- Limit contact with commonly touched surfaces or shared items, such as serving utensils.
- Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and any shared items between use when feasible.
- Plan ahead and ask guests to avoid contact with people outside of their households for 14 days before the gathering.
- Wear a mask while preparing food for or serving food to others who don't live in your household.
- Limit people going in and out of the areas where food is being prepared or handled, such as in the kitchen or around the grill, if possible.
- Wash dishes in the dishwasher or with hot soapy water immediately following the gathering.

The more of these prevention measures that you put in place, the safer your gathering will be. No one measure is enough to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Mindful of the change in our status from ‘sporadic cases’ to ‘clusters of cases’, additional public health restrictions will be put in place.

First, as we must be more cautious with our care homes due to the vulnerability of their population, the Ministry is proposing to restrict care home visiting. The primary change is a return to only essential visitors being allowed inside the home. However, restricted outdoor visiting will be permitted. This will impact the availability of activities in these homes, including daycare. The Ministry is currently consulting with care homes on this matter, and a decision and order will be issued before the week’s end.

Second, the Ministry will seek changes to the Public Health (COVID-19 Emergency Powers) (No. 3) Regulations 2020 to achieve:

- a reduction in large group size from 75 to 50 persons;
- and,
- a more comprehensive mandatory mask mandate.

In closing, 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.

Thank you.