

COVID-19 Facebook live update: June 14, 2021

>> Pat: I'm Pat Living with the Department of Health and Social Services and moderator for the clinical COVID-19 update.

We are joined by Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health, Catherine Elliott.

Sign language interpretation is provided by Mary Tiessen and French language translation is by Andre.

We will go to the phones for questions and will call you by name and you will each have taught 12 questions.

>> Good morning everyone.

I am on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün and the Taa'an Kwächän Council. and I'm honoured to serve all Yukoners and all first nations people.

Yesterday I declared an outbreak of COVID-19 among youth and adults associated with the graduation events and those who are socializing in close proximity such as in bars and house parties.

As of today this includes 23 cases, 18 in Whitehorse and four in world.

One case we don't have a lot of information about and that's a lot to be determined and we now have 21 active cases in the territory.

Nine cases are linked to this outbreak and nine are unvaccinated.

We are still waiting for information about that person.

This is an outbreak of the Gamma variant of COVID-19 which is a variant of concern first recognized in Japan among people travelling from Brazil.

This variant is more infectious than previous strains.

It maybe able to infect those who have previously had COVID-19 appeared and we also know to watch while doses of vaccine plus 14 weeks -- 14 days, to so those who are fully vaccinated are protected.

Why did we declared outbreak?

It's when a group of cases occur among the common location or or people who share affiliation such as high school students, et cetera.

Some are direct contacts of each other, five of our cases, secondary cases.

And some are linked by events or locations.

Those are three primary cases.

Cases are yet to be determined whether primary or secondary.

The Porter Creek grad classes isolating as are many cases and potential cases.

Those in Yukon are taking the right steps and are attempting to prevent further staff -- spread.

Any people of asked me what can I do.

It's more important now than ever before to get vaccinated.

The vaccine protects against the variant including Gamma are P1.

This variant is highly transmissible amongst those who are not fully vaccinated and leaves less room for error.

If you are one of those people who were not yet fully vaccinated the wait to stop the variant is to practice the safe six plus one.

Keep your distance.

1 Cariboo part, two Huskies.

Wash your hands.

Wash them carefully and take the time to use your soap and water to make sure you plead antivirus off your hands.

If you develop symptoms don't push through or go to work, don't go to activities and protect the people around you.

Get yourself tested.

Follow the guidelines for COVID-19.

Many children are at camps today and many people are going tomtom Business.

Limit your travel to rural communities and if you do travel be mindful.

And where your mask.

Follow the border measures.

If you have been out of territories and are not fully vaccinated, isolates.

Keep your bubble small and familiar and limit your visits with those who are at severe risk.

Including those with chronic conditions and people who are older, seniors and elders.

And people with very different types of different conditions such as asthma and those with heart disease and those who use alcohol and other substances.

Those who are immunosuppressed or recovering from cancer.

I want to point out that I have a 24 confirmed cases that have been identified since June 4th only one was fully vaccinated and that individual had mild illness.

You may wonder how someone who was vaccinated can get COVID-19.

It does occur and it is rare.

Usually happens due to prolonged close contact, household contact, caregiving for someone, your partner or someone who it is close who has the disease and gives it to you.

In those circumstances it is usually miles and the risk of severe illness and death are decreased.

We do have cases in communities and all those cases have been linked to one contact who was either in Whitehorse or cases themselves were in Whitehorse.

People are asking what is our exposure noticed, do we have any?

I am pleased to see people asking these questions.

Here it is.

If you attended any graduation events either formal or informal, maybe a trip or a party in the evening, or a dinner or an organized event at the school we are asking you to please monitor yourself or symptoms, isolate yourself if you got symptoms and get tested.

Now that we are seeing cases this includes those who are engaged in these activities who have returned to communities or who have been engaging in socializing without physical distancing whether in communities or here in Whitehorse.

I will let you know if this changes.

We will not issue for specific locations at this time.

I think people can work with this guidance.

Individuals who are vaccinated and follow the safe six and wear a mask are protected.

We still need more people to get vaccinated.

Our rates are good but each person is protected when those people around them are protected.

The way to protect your loved ones and those in your social bubble and those you work with is to become vaccinated.

I am concerned about the outbreak at this point and our hope is not to have any more severe cases or hospitalizations in a way we do that is by stopping the spread.

We must be calm and respectful.

Thank you for listening to me today and I'm happy to take questions.

>> Pat: We will go to the phone lines now and begin with Tim from the Whitehorse star.

>> Reporter: Can you hear me?

>> Pat: We can.

>> Reporter: I missed the first few moments due to a technical hiccup but I have a couple questions.

Perhaps you answer them or maybe not.

Do you have any idea what the source of the outbreak is?

>> We don't know the source.

We do know how things are spreading at this moment and they are spreading from person to person.

People who are socializing.

And people who aren't vaccinated.

Thanks Tim.

>> Pat: To have another question?

>> Reporter: The graduation celebrations that were going on, were they observing all of the proper social spacing and wearing masks or do you know that?

>> We were tasked with the committees to design safe protocols for the graduation cap and gown ceremonies and the dinners.

And we know that some of the spread has occurred for!" social contact.

I'm not at liberty to say where the contact has occurred.

>> We will now move to Marion.

[Speaking French]

>> Pat: We will move to Camille from the Canadian press.

Camille?

We will come back Claudia and at a radio Canada?

[Speaking French]

>> Hello?

>> Hello?

>> Pat: Will move to Claudia and and then go back to Camille.

[Simultaneous Talking]

[Speaking French]

[Speaking French]

>> Andre: You are nervous about this outbreak, can you tell us what makes you nervous about it?

[Speaking French]

[Speaking French]

>> Andre: What are your specific recommendations for everyone that was involved in these activities?

Parents and teachers and students?

What do you want them to do from now on and for how long?

[Speaking French]

[Speaking French]

[Speaking French]

>> Pat: If you could please repeat some of that in English?

We've had many requests.

[Laughter]

>> The question was, what are we asking people to do?

We have so many contacts at this point but we are asking for the first time publicly people to take actions that normally we prefer you talk to the public health nurse and get individualized advice.

[Speaking French]

In English, the first thing I want to say is that our Yukon communicable disease nurses are working extremely hard and to and we have many contacts well over 100 and we are giving advice through the media and through letters and distribution lists we would prefer to give one on one to people.

Here's the advice.

The first thing is if you talk to a Yukon communicable disease control nurse, they will give you the best advice for your specific case and it might be different from the general advice I'm about to give.

Follow the advice they give you.

If you know that you are a contact of the case, a contact means you have shared saliva in some way, maybe vaping or water bottles or intimate contact with the case, you need to isolate.

You may also be a contact of a case if you spend 15 minutes in conversation or close contact with outside physical distance.

You are also a contact.

You also need to isolate.

Please isolate for 14 days from the last contact with unknown case or person with COVID-19.

If you are a contact, and you are fully vaccinated you only need to isolate if that, is prolonged household contacts.

Someone you live for, even if you don't live with that person that is where we tend to see breakthrough cases or those among fully vaccinated people.

If you are a contact of the case and you are fully vaccinated, two vaccines plus two weeks, we ask you to self monitor.

Check in with yourself throughout the day and ask yourself how you are doing.

If you have any symptoms of COVID-19 no matter how mild please isolate yourself from others and seek testing.

If you have been at an event or party or you been socializing in close proximity such as bars or house parties and you are not a contact of a case we are asking you to please self monitor.

Please check in with yourself if you have any symptoms.

Everyone else, it's a good idea to get tested if you have symptoms.

And please be kind to each other and let's take care of each other.

>> Pat: We will go back to Camille from the Canadian press.

>> Reporter: Sorry about that.

I'd like to know, you mentioned earlier you are concerned about the outbreak.

What is your main concern at this point and one has happened in the Yukon where cases were low and cannot serve as a cautionary tale for other jurisdictions?

That are opening up?

>> I'm said I am concerned about this outbreak.

What concerns me is the disease is being spread and has been spread about those who are in close contact.

Some of these people know each other and some people could have spread it to people they don't know.]

With this type of contact the possibility for spread is high spread is already happening and everyone has started again following the safe six.

And wearing their mask.

That's my hope.

My concern is with all the fatigue we all have, people are finding this hard to do and without doing this for people who haven't had their full vaccination COVID-19 will spread.

It was very good at transmitting from person to person before it evolved.

COVID-19 is even better at spreading and leaves less room for error.

He requires each and every one of us to do our part to stop the spread including those people that made it and haven't the what was the second part?

>> Considering you guys were doing well and other jurisdictions are opening up, could serve as a cautionary tale for others?

>> I think one of the early lessons, it is something we know but sometimes people -- we need to fall down before we learn lessons.

I think we've repeatedly said and our guidance hasn't changed, and at the same time many people have reduced the amount they are doing that.

So, you know, the cautionary tale is people like to talk about herd immunity.

What really matters as much as the big number in the population, what matters is the people around you and if you want to protect the people you love, you then want the people around that person to be vaccinated fully because that is protective.

I think that we -- the guidance and the rules are solid and they work and requires this ongoing diligence and persistence and following those guidelines.

I think the cautionary tale is if we let our guard down, COVID-19 is highly transmissible and will spread.

>> Pat: Do you have a second question Camille?

>> What percentage of people have been vaccinated there and would Yukon consider any kind of incentive to try to get that number down?

>> I don't have the exact proportion.

Our vaccine program for 12 and over begun in June and many people have received their first dose including clinics in communities and this week we have a clinic in old Crow on Tuesday for young people to get vaccinated.

We do not have fully vaccinated young people in the territory in any significant numbers at this point and we are seeing that young people are continuing to get vaccinated so, for example,, weather an adult or a young person, one of the people in this outbreak who has COVID-19 has had a vaccine but it has not been two weeks so they are not partially vaccinated.

But they have had a vaccine.

We are rapidly making appointments available throughout the territory for young people and adults and we have an active program to help people learn and who have questions and become confident in the safety and efficacy and we continue to do that.

We are looking at all avenues to help people become vaccinated.

>> Pat: We will now move to gym from the Yukon news.

>> Reporter: I was wondering if there was anything more we can tell the public about this Gamma variant that has been causing these cases particularly because this outbreaks involves young people.

Are there major differences in the severity of illness?

When compared to the original variant?

>> Thank you.

Gamma variant is one first identified in Japan and has caused major outbreaks in Brazil.

There has been outbreaks in the Lower Mainland in BC and throughout Canada.

In British Columbia, the Gamma variant and the Elsa or the UK be 117 variant -- B.1.1.7 are both quite dominant.

Because of the nature of any number of things through research out of Brazil is slow and it's not very strong.

I think there was a lot of challenges caused by this variant and by other circumstances that have prevented strong research from coming out of Brazil.

We are seeing research come out of British Columbia where the Gamma variant has become more prevalent.

We have good vaccine effectiveness coming out of BC and we will continue to learn for the gamma and other variants.

Though studies show the vaccine is effective against the Gamma variant.

In terms of severity -- severity the literature is mixed and we don't have a strong sense on if it causes more severe illness but there is indication from Brazil that it can cause infection and disease and those who have previously had COVID-19 and cause those reinfections and in terms of the question around young people, is this a variants like alpha that is spreading more easily among young people, we don't know.]

In terms of severity we don't have a signal of increase severity.

We do know it has coincided with severe illness in various places but we don't have good denominator data meaning the total amount of cases.

The counting of the total amount is not fantastic so there is more to be learned here and this is what we know at this time.

>> Pat: Do you have a second question gym?

>> Reporter: I do not.

>> Pat: We'll move to Jackie from CBC.

>> Reporter: Could you share how many of the current active cases are related to Porter Creek secondary school?

And I'm wondering if finding the source is something you are still working on or is it a situation where we will never know.

>> We are actively looking for a source or the origin of this outbreak.

And as soon as we know anything we will share that.

The other part of the question was how many cases are associated with Porter Creek, it's not something we've tallied up because we don't have complete information but we know there are cases associated with Porter Creek and there are cases in people of the same age and we don't know if they are associated with it.

And we do know the graduating class were socializing physical distancing there in organizer on organizing events so I will not be surprised to see cases and other high schools.

And may well be Porter Creek was the first secondary school diagnosed but not the first school with people in the school who were infected.

We will keep you posted as we continue to discover more about this outbreak.

>> Pat: Do you have a second question Jackie?

>> Reporter: We've been seeing first Nations and communities self identify as having these cases.

And having active COVID cases.

I know the official policy is to not identify communities for privacy reasons but for those were there are 100 residents presumably everyone knows.

Were there any discussions about changing this policy about identifying which communities have active COVID cases?

>> At this time we are not naming specific communities.

It can be quite stigmatizing and communities can be looked down upon because they have a single case of COVID-19 which is the unfortunate truth.

It's also supertight communities.

Individuals and community mayors, chiefs and Council, they are able to share this information and I wouldn't be surprised if we do certainly larger places talk about, we had in the past for example Dawson a site where we'd seen cases in his time the Mayor has said there are cases in Dawson city.

So we were to do what's really important to prevent the spread and reduce the spread.

Because we've identified cases in one community or another community it does not mean there aren't cases in other communities.

I think it takes away from the message that we know that people have been infected who live in communities and those people have building to Whitehorse and we are asking people who have symptoms to get tested.

>> Pat: We will move to Lori.

[Speaking French]

>> Andre: The question is, for the youth had have been infected are in contact does not also mean their parents and family also need to self isolate if it's the case?

[Speaking French]

>> Pat: Do have another question Lori?

[Speaking French]

>> Andre: Do you feel we might see more outbreaks with youth now that school is over and they have more time to get together?

>> It's hard to speculate --

[Speaking French]

>> Pat: You started out in English, in your repeated in English has while?

[Laughter]

>> What do I expect to see with schools out and children and youth out of school.

I think it's difficult to speculate on human behaviour and what will happen in the days to come.

COVID again and again has taken us by surprise and we've seen across Canada where people socialize without physical distancing particularly outside their bubble.

, this is how COVID spread.

This depends on getting vaccinated and following the various COVID plans and recommendations that exist.

>> Pat: We will move to Sarah from APTN.

>> Reporter: Can you hear me.

>> Pat: You are very faint, but, yes.

>> Reporter: I will try to shout a little bit.

Have about now.

>> Pat: Yes.

Please go ahead.

>> Reporter: With all these new cases does this mean we will see more restrictions introduced again or perhaps closing the border again?

>> With all the new cases will we see restrictions increase or go back to where they were previously.

At this point cases are linked to cases and events for groups of people and that's why this is an outbreak.

We don't add this time have a plan -- I will start with we do have

a plan for when and how we will increase measures if needed but we are not there yet.

But as the situation changes and the information comes out we may need to increase measures.

It depends a lot on what happens in the next couple of days and on everyone doing their part to be responsible at this time.

>> Pat: Do you have a second question.

>> Reporter: That was everything for me.

Thank you.

>> Pat: We'll move to Luke from CK RW.

>> Reporter: Doctor Elliott how strong is the messaging into schools towards youth as far as getting vaccinated goes?

I know a lot of you are finished school were are getting out of school.

>> I think at this time people are very motivated to get vaccinated we encourage all youths to have their first shot and if they've had it, to half their second shot and we do see that happening.

We will use communications to how people learn more about the vaccine and we have the website were young people and adults can book their appointments.

We ask you book them online as drop in can be challenging.

We are encouraging people to book their appointments and continue to do that.

>> Thank you.

>> Pat: Do have another question Luke.

>> Reporter: Just the one.

>> Pat: We have had one question come in over the livestream Doctor Elliott so if I could ask you to explain to parents of graduating students or those who have may been involved what they should be doing.

>> Parents of those who have graduated or who have been at graduating events, formal or informal should be monitoring -- the student should monitor for symptoms and the parents who attended those events should self monitor.

Check-in throughout the day and see if you have symptoms, isolate if you have symptoms, and seek testing.

>> Pat: I'd like to thank everyone.

Our regular update will take place on Wednesday June 16th at 10:30 AM.