

COVID-19 Facebook live update: November 24, 2021

>> Good morning to all.

I'm Renée Francoeur with Cabinet Communications and the moderator for today's COVID-19 update.

We are joined today by Premier Sandy Silver and acting Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. André Corriveau.

Close captioning is provided by National Closed Captioning.

Thank you to Mary Tiessen for providing ASL interpretation and André Bourcier for providing French interpretation.

Following the remarks from speakers we will go to media present in the room and then onto the phone lines for round of questions.

I will call you by name and you will each have two questions.

Before we begin with our speakers I would like to verify that everyone can hear us. If any reporters are having problems, please email [ecoinfo at Yukon.ca](mailto:ecoinfo@Yukon.ca).

I will now hand over to Premier Sandy Silver.

>> Thank you everybody. Good morning.

Thanks for joining us here on [the] Traditional Territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

I'm very pleased to be joined here again with our acting Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. André Corriveau to talk more about our current response to COVID-19 in the territory.

We have sadly lost another Yukoner to COVID-19. That's in the last week and of course our thoughts are with the friends and the loved ones of this individual.

Twelve Yukoners have now died from COVID-19 and this is absolutely tragic.

We need to do everything we possibly can to prevent the spread of COVID19. And to protect Yukoners. That involves getting vaccinated if you haven't already; these vaccines are still the best protection against COVID-19.

Those who are vaccinated are much less likely to suffer severely from the symptoms, from COVID-19, if they do get infected.

COVID-19 remains a serious threat to our public health and we need to continue to take all precautions to keep everyone safe.

Last week we were happy to hear that Health Canada has authorized the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for children, five to 11.

[Cough.] Excuse me.

This is what we've been waiting for and the day has finally arrived.

I know many parents and guardians, all with those youngsters, are very happy to see this. Very relieved, especially as we inch closer and closer to the holiday season. So this is absolutely welcome news and marks another milestone as we take steps to protect the health and safety of Yukoners.

The vaccine for children arrived in Canada on Sunday. We expect to be receiving our supply from the federal government in the coming days. And we are on track to opening up our vaccine clinics for children, Yukon children, ages five to 11 in early December.

Our amazing and dedicated immunizers, the immunization team, they have already completed extensive training and planning for the kids' vaccine. They are ready and online bookings will be available later this week.

I want to thank all of our immunizers, all of our support staff as well, that make these clinics happen. It is a team Yukon effort, that's for sure, and it is helping keep all of us safe in the territory. So thank you very, very much.

Like always the spot to go for appointments is www.yukon.ca/this-is-our-shot.

Clinic information will be available this week. You can also call the COVID-19 info line for information on clinic dates and times. That phone number once again is 1-877-374-0425.

And please if you have any questions about the vaccine and the safety of your kids, reach out to a health care

professional or take a look at some of the great resources that are also available on Yukon.ca. Or stay tuned and hear Dr. Corriveau discussing the safety and efficacy of this vaccine and his comments.

We continue to encourage everyone to get vaccinated. The vaccines are our best protection against COVID-19. Everyone that steps up to take their shot is helping to protect our territory, so thank you very much.

In other good news, if you have an app phone, sorry, if you have a phone whether it's Apple or Google, we have our apps up and ready for you on those sites. Our new Yukon Vaccination Verifier app is available for free for download.

The tech giants have approved our app this week and I'm excited to let designated services and establishments know that this tool can now help them efficiently verify Yukoners' proof of vaccine credentials.

These apps, they scan the QR code and you will find your proof of vaccination credential whether it's a digital or paper copy and then it confirms, clearly confirms, that the person is fully or partially vaccinated.

This will absolutely help our businesses and organizations to verify their vaccine status of their patrons.

I downloaded it myself. I have used the Apple app. I tried it out this morning. It is free and easy and very simple to understand. It's great to see the big green checkmark that shows someone is fully vaccinated flash across the screen.

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This app scans any QR code that meets the federal standard which includes almost all provinces and territories at this point.

You must have an internet connection to download the app but you do not need an internet connection to use, to scan, the QR codes. Both the credential that you can download from Yukon.ca and this app, they protect your privacy. No data is stored on the app.

As I said they are both available. Google was just this morning that we received approval from them. So with the Google Play store for android users, that is up and running today, and of course Apple yesterday or the day before. So it's great.

For most iPhones, android or otherwise, we have another tool as this app we can become acquainted with as we adapt to living with COVID-19.

We have to continue to be careful. We all have a role to play in keeping our territory healthy and safe. This includes practising the Safe Six, washing our hands often, maintaining physical distancing, staying home if you're sick, travelling respectfully and responsible -- responsibly and only when necessary for the time being. Self-isolate as required and follow the gathering guidelines. It's also very important to wear your mask, especially when you cannot maintain physical distance, and when you are around folks that are not in your household.

The actions that you take, not only protect yourself, they also protect your family, friends and your neighbourhood and, if we are all doing this together, going in the same direction, then hopefully that means an end to these emergency measures sooner than later.

A lot of folks and organizations have been doing an incredible job and so I really thank everybody from the bottom of my heart.

Thank you for all the work of the businesses, organizations. Some are finding the restrictions more challenging. I completely understand that. Sadly some folks are being disrespectful. No one wants to see this happening at our local businesses or public event spaces either or even our backyards.

We're Yukoners and what we do is we look after each other as Yukoners. So please show your hard-working health care providers on the front lines and businesses the respect that they deserve.

Please understand that when a local businessperson, when they are asking you for proof of vaccination, or reminding you to wear a mask, they are doing that because of the requirements.

We are happy to see most people are being extremely respectful and really encourage that. Happy to see more of that.

If you do have questions or concerns where these temporary measures are not being followed, there is a line to call. Our enforcement team can be reached at 867-393-6210.

You can also send an email and that is to the COVID-19 enforcement at yukon.ca. Or you can also fill out a report form online at Yukon.ca, under the contact list for COVID-19 section of that website.

So in closing folks, I appreciate your time today and for listening. It's getting cold out there and the holidays are coming. I know the value of gatherings as we see less and less of the sun.

I know it's very hard these days to limit your activities as well, and going back to Friday Zoom calls, those types of things. Nobody wants to be in that situation.

These are temporary measures, folks, to prevent the continued spread of COVID-19 and to prevent our healthcare system from being overwhelmed. Collectively we can ensure that the coming months lead to a brighter future.

Thank you very much for your attention today and I'll pass it off to the good doctor.

>> Well, thank you Premier Silver.

[Speaking French]

Welcome everybody. I think I'm bringing mostly good news today. Generally speaking. So let's start with the case counts overview.

There's been a total of 1,454 cases to date with 1,338 people recovered and 12 Yukoners who have died from COVID since the beginning of the pandemic. As of this morning we have 121 active cases and in the last few days we've seen our active cases going down faster than the new cases which are decreasing.

Since November 16 we have had four additional hospitalizations and one medevac to southern hospitals related to COVID.

Over the past week we saw stabilization of -- and what we're seeing this week is a beginning of what we hope will be a continuing and increasing downward slope in the daily case count, which tracks really well with the model that we were using.

While we are still seeing multiple cases per day, the impact of the circuit breaker at this stage is that it did interrupt the exponential increase last week and then we expect to see its great impact by the end of this week.

It normally takes 10 to 14 days to fully impact additional public health measures.

As the pool of unimmunized people continues to decrease, we are also not seeing the same impact of the current wave on hospitalizations and death as seen in the previous one.

We still have community spread primarily in Whitehorse and clusters in a few other communities.

I would like to clarify briefly what we mean with an active case and how this number may differ from daily case count.

For us an active case is one that is considered to be still in the infectious period. This is normally the term with some exceptions to be within 10 days of the onset of the first onset of symptoms.

As many of you know, the Premier highlighted this, we now have access to the Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty pediatric vaccine for kids age five to 11.

We expect shipment of this vaccine will arrive in the Yukon later this week and then we will have to be shipped to all or health centres. This is very exciting news.

The Yukon government is planning to offer the Pfizer pediatric vaccine to all children age five to 11 as soon as possible. We are still looking at the first week of December for that. The vaccine is administered as a two-dose, primary series. With the recommended interval of eight weeks between the two doses.

It's going to be given via an injection into the arm muscle, like it was in older kids and adults.

But we are going to be using, this vaccine uses smaller needles and the dose is also quite small, about one third of the does for people 12 and up. It's 10-microgram dose of mRNA.

The Pfizer pediatric vaccine for children also contains a different buffer than the vaccine that was used for older children and adults. And this buffer, which is used in other approved vaccines, helps to keep the vaccine stable in refrigerated temperatures for longer, which will allow for an easier distribution across our communities.

In clinical trials the vaccine prevented children aged five to 11 from becoming sick with COVID and from severe illness with almost 91 per cent efficacy.

The children given the Pfizer vaccine had side effects similar to those experienced by people age 16 and older. The most common reported being pain where the shot was given for a few days, fatigue, headache, some chills. Some children will experience some chills the day after. Muscle pain, mild fever, joint pain and decreased appetite.

So it's very similar to adults in the sense that it usually lasts for one or two days after the immunization. And the majority will have very little or no side effects at all.

The United States, which is already a couple weeks ahead of us, there's been no reports of serious adverse reactions. So that's also strengthened our confidence that this vaccine is going to be quite safe for children. And, of course, which is a concern of many parents. So in clinical trials, there has been no serious side effects. Like I said, in the US right now there's been no sort of flag, or red flag, about unexpected or unusual side effects.

So I understand that parents will want to give careful consideration to all the available information before deciding to get their child vaccinated.

While COVID-19 infection in children is often quite milder than what we see in adults, some kids do get severe lung infection, or unusual complications from getting infected, Immunization will protect from those severe symptoms and sickness as well as help prevent them from getting COVID and spreading it to others.

We know that children have experienced collateral harms from the pandemic – school disruptions, social isolation and reduced access to academic and extracurricular resources that have an impact on mental and physical wellbeing.

Vaccinating children ages five and older will help keep our schools safe and allow a lot of this programming to resume as it was before so that kids can participate safely in sports and play dates and other group activities.

I urge you then to talk to your kids about the vaccine ahead of time. If you have questions please reach out to our health care practitioners or call the 811 number. And as mentioned by the Premier, more information will be available regarding the rollout over the coming week.

[Languages.]

Thank you.

>> Thank you.

We'll now move on to the question and answer session with media. A reminder to reporters, please identify which speaker you would like to answer your question before you start. And please also remember to mute and unmute yourselves.

We will first go to the reporter in the room and start with [name] CBC.

Welcome.

>> Thank you.

My first question is for the Premier.

How are you going to convince parents who are hesitant to have their children five to 11 years old vaccinated?

>> It's a really good question.

Again we ask people to not get their information off of social media. We ask them to go to credible sites for that information. In my beginning notes as well, talking about information available online. I know the Department of Education is talking as well as far as information and that type of thing and getting it directly to the students.

We've been here for 20 months now talking about the efficacy of these vaccinations, talking about how Health Canada is really a gold standard right across the whole world as far as if it's been approved by Health Canada, it is safe, it's effective.

Looking at some of the stats, I asked people to look at stats about vaccinated versus unvaccinated when it comes to hospitalizations, when it comes to times in which you are sick, when it comes to the morbidity rates as well, these are very effective vaccines.

I'm a product of vaccines myself. I'm old enough to have that scar on my arm as far as, for smallpox, and so again, Health Canada is one of the most legitimate health care providers in the world.

We believe in these vaccines. Information is available online and again talk to people that are respected in the medical community and we believe that the information is out there and these vaccines are extremely safe.

What we're hearing too is a lot of parents are telling us how excited they are that this is finally come.

Again when we're looking at hopefully the civil emergency measures coming -- everybody wants to lift them, including me. If we practise the Safe 6 and increase vaccination rates, these are the things that we can do as a community to make sure we get back to normal as soon as possible.

>> Thank you.

Do you have a follow-up?

>> I have a second question for the Chief Medical Officer.

Can you tell us how many numbers of COVID-19 cases have there been in schools since the academic year started both for teachers and students?

>> I'm not sure I have the number but we were looking at the data this morning and the percentage of cases that were in the five to 11 was 22 per cent in the past few weeks. So it's still the majority of our cases are appearing in the 20- to 49-year-old, that's still the bulk of all your cases even as we speak.

>> We will now go to the phone lines and we will start with Nick from Canadian Press.

>> Reporter: ...

>> Nick are you with us? Nick, we'll circle back to you.

We'll now go to John at CKRW. Hello John? Can you hear us?

Apologies everyone. We are just having a little technical difficulty. Bear with us.

Everyone please stand by. We will be back in a short while.

>> Okay.

Hi everyone. Sincere apologies. We have lost our phone line. I apologize to the reporters on the line. Please email ecoinfo at yukon.ca and we can follow up on your questions.

Our sincere apologies. Thank you to everyone who did join us.

Thank you to [the] speakers. [The] next COVID-19 update will be next week.

Everyone have a wonderful day.

Thank you.