

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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NWHU watching situation in Thunder Bay closely

Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) is closely watching the high numbers of COVID-19 cases in Thunder Bay and urges the public to be vigilant with prevention measures.

On February 10, 2021, Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) declared an outbreak of COVID-19 among individuals who are experiencing homelessness and under-housing. Case numbers continue to rise in the community and they are now in the Grey-Lockdown level of the Province's COVID-19 Response Framework.

Public health officials note that preventing such a situation from happening in our area depends on the actions of our residents. "COVID-19 cannot spread unless we give it a chance to. Although small gatherings are permitted in our area, I do not advise getting together indoors with anyone that you do not live with," says Dr. Kit Young Hoon, Medical Officer of Health at NWHU. The public is urged to stay at least 2 metres away from anyone who is not a household member.

As a strengthened measure, the province is now requiring household members of anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 to stay home until COVID-19 test results are known. "These prevention measures may seem extreme, but they are a way to prevent wide-spread transmission of the virus," advises Dr. Young Hoon.

At this time, NWHU advises against any non-essential travel, especially to areas with a higher risk, like Thunder Bay. "If travelling for an essential reason, prevention measures must be practised while away from home. Upon return to our region, you should self-monitor for symptoms daily and get tested and self-isolate if any symptom develops," says Dr. Young Hoon. An additional measure to take when entering the region from a high risk area is to significantly reduce contact with others for 14 days to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

This week, NWHU is meeting with local partners across the region to discuss enhanced measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in populations that are experiencing homelessness and under-housing.

For more information about COVID-19, visit www.nwhu.on.ca/covid19 or call NWHU's COVID-19 hotline at 1-866-468-2240.

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A reminder to the media that Dr. Kit Young Hoon hosts online COVID-19 media briefings every Tuesday, 1:30 pm CT and Friday, 10:00 am CT as well as Q&A sessions for the public every second Thursday, 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm CT. If you do not have a link to the media briefings, please email jbegg@nwhu.on.ca.