

Furness said Ontarians may start to see hospitals inundated as early as New Year's Day.

"I think we're going to see a grotesque spike," he said. "By the time we're in the first week of January, I think we're going to start to see those numbers climb."

Stranges said this could be the case by mid-January. "There is always that window of time from when you are exposed to when you develop symptoms," he said. "The numbers will potentially escalate after a couple of weeks."

What should I know going into the holidays?

Furness said one important factor for residents to note is that as COVID-19 becomes more prevalent, the force of infection goes up.

This means it will take increasingly less exposure time for someone to become infected with the virus.

"Just getting on the bus becomes less safe, just going into a store becomes less safe, simply continuing to do what you do gets progressively less safe as there is more coronavirus around," he said.

"People need to be really looking around and really mindfully taking stock of their risk and saying, 'Where can I reduce my risk?'"

Fulford agreed, adding that she advises people have a "quieter" season this year.

"You can still have your tree, you can still have your gifts, you can still do fancy gift exchanges, you can do drive-bys," she said. "We can keep our fingers crossed for good weather, because if you could do stuff outdoors, that would be ideal."

Furness said there are two different groups of people affected by the restrictions: those with agency and those without.

He said while some citizens, including many in low-income and racialized communities, are forced to work in essential roles and put themselves in potentially risky situations from day to day, those who have the ability to stay home should be doing their best to protect others.

"COVID is a racist problem, and what I would say to every entitled privileged person