

COVID-19 Mitigation versus suppression

- Our strategy is focusing on keeping COVID-19 out, stamping it out and slowing it down.
- Our aim is to prevent widespread outbreaks. Allowing widespread outbreaks (ie trajectories along the orange and blue curves ('flattening the curve')) will significantly overwhelm the health system.
- The strategy centres on border restrictions, intense testing, aggressive contact tracing, and stringent self-isolation and quarantine.
- Physical distancing will also be required to varying degrees as we continue along this path.
- We can call this a **suppression** strategy.
- Should outbreaks occur, a suppression strategy aims to reverse epidemic growth through tougher public health measures – eg by more intense physical distancing and travel restrictions.
- The aim is to ensure that health system capacity is not exceeded through strengthening public health measures.
- When cases fall, public health measures can be eased slightly.
- This cycle repeats itself (refer squiggly green line).
- However, we must still prepare for times when capacity of the health system is exceeded by having 'surge' options.
- A suppression strategy does incur significant economic and social disruption. Longer periods of physical distancing, including school closures, will be required.
- However, many lives will be saved and more people remain well so are able to operate the economy and the health care system.
- We would need to maintain this approach until a vaccine is developed, which is *at least* January 2021, and/or the global pandemic has passed.
- This approach is distinct from a **mitigation** strategy, which focuses on reducing the size of the peak (ie moving from the orange curve to the blue curve).

