

FAQs About Household Isolation Related to Screening and Self-assessment

The Province of Ontario has issued new guidance and updated screening tools to protect against COVID-19 Variants of Concern.

A key update is that if anyone who lives in a household has a new or worsening symptom(s) of COVID-19, they must isolate and all members of the household must stay home.

Everyone in your household must stay home if anyone has COVID-19 symptom(s) (and they failed the screening tool) or is waiting for test results after experiencing symptom(s).

Are there any exemptions? Can I go to work?

While this direction applies to all households, there are a couple of exemptions.

- If your household has a member who is isolating because they were told to isolate by public health as a close contact of someone with COVID-19, then household members can continue to leave the house for essential reasons only (work, school, medical reasons, groceries). If the close contact becomes symptomatic, then the household members should self-isolate and discuss further with Northwestern Health Unit.
- If your household has a member who is isolating because they have a symptom of COVID-19 (i.e. they have used the Ontario [screening tool](#) and failed), then all household members must stay at home. The only exemption is health care workers, who could do [work self-isolation](#) if allowed by their agency. In extreme circumstances the NWHU might also approve work self-isolation related to the operations of critical community infrastructure.

When can the household return to regular?

- The person in the house isolating with symptoms must stay home for 10 days or until a test shows they are negative for COVID-19, or a health care provider has given another diagnosis. When one of these conditions is met, the household can resume regular activities.
- If the person with symptoms does not get a test or another diagnosis, household contacts must isolate for 14 days since last contact with the symptomatic individual.

How does the NWHU Class Order Section 22 fit in?

- Please note that the Class Section Order 22 issued by NWHU does not apply to household members of symptomatic individuals, unless they have been told by public health to self-isolate.
- Find more information here: <https://www.nwhu.on.ca/covid19/Pages/Class-Section-22-Order.aspx>

What is a symptom?

- It is important to read the whole description of each symptom on the Ontario screening tool
- As with any virus, the symptom should be new for the individual, and not related to any other known cause
- Only the individual or a parent/ guardian can judge whether an individual fails screening; workplaces, schools and daycares must require the screening gets done but cannot interpret the screening

Who is enforcing the new requirement for household isolation?

- Though household isolation of symptomatic individuals is a requirement of the province, there is currently no enforcement mechanism in place.



Questions related to Children with Symptoms

When should a child stay home from school?

- Each morning, each student should complete the COVID-19 School and Child care screening tool. The tool advises when a student should stay home related to risk of COVID-19.
- If you notice the child/youth has new or worsening symptoms, what you need to do depends on whether the symptom is usual and explainable for the child/youth, or if it is a brand new symptom(s) that could be COVID-19. Use this resource to help: What to do when a student is unwell

What about pre-existing illness, chronic illness, or usual symptoms for my child?

- When doing the screening tool, passing/failing depends on if the symptom is new, worsening, and not related to other known causes or conditions they already have).
- In these cases, the illness is not likely related to COVID-19, the child can return to school when they are feeling better, and the household is NOT required to isolate under these circumstances.

My child passed the screen, but the school sent them home...what do I do?

- Children can at any point in the day develop symptoms of COVID-19 that require them to be sent home.
- Many times this is unrelated to COVID-19 – something pre-existing, explainable by other reasons, or something usual for the child. If this is the case, the child can return to school when they are feeling better – at the parent's discretion.
- Parents are encouraged to talk with the school and alert them to these situations to decrease the risk of them being sent home the next day.
- However, if the child is unwell with cold or flu -like symptoms, they should be tested for COVID-19 or wait for 10 days before return to school. It is impossible to know whether symptoms are related to a cold, flu, or COVID-19 without a test.

Who gets to decide if the child can return to school if they have COVID-19 symptoms?

- If a student had COVID-19 symptoms that are not related to other known causes, parents can send their child back to school when the following conditions are met:
- No test, but 10 days have passed; or
- Test, with a negative result and feeling better (no fever, symptoms improving); or
- Another diagnosis or was absent due to another illness

Do I need a Doctor's note to return to school?

- No, it is not recommended that you seek a Doctor's note for the child to return to school.
- Please do not visit your doctor for an alternate diagnosis if you think it is a common cold. A COVID-19 test is the only way to determine if cold-like symptoms is caused by COVID-19 or another viral illness.

My child needs to get picked up from school because they have symptoms, does my whole family need to start isolating immediately?

- If your child develops symptoms of COVID-19 during the day and needs to be picked up (i.e. its something that's new or worsening and not explainable by other reasons like menstrual cramps for example), then other family members should also isolate as soon as possible (when they return home from school and work that day).

