



February 19, 2021

Dear parents and guardians,

I want to inform you about additional COVID-19 safety measures in schools and child care that are now in effect across Ontario. The new measures build on the existing ones that have been in place since September, and were added due to the risk of COVID-19 variants of concern (VOC). As of today, we have not seen VOCs in our region, however they are spread very easily and have been found in other areas of the province.

Parents and guardians have an important role to play in making sure the new measures are followed, and they will require us all to be even more diligent.

The most significant changes are:

Staff, students and children with any new or worsening symptom of COVID-19, even those with only one symptom, must stay home, without exemption, until:

- The symptomatic individual receives a negative COVID-19 test result, or
- The symptomatic individual receives an alternate diagnosis by a health care professional
- If there is no test or alternate diagnosis, the symptomatic individual must isolate for 10 days from symptom onset, and all other household members must isolate for 14 days from their last contact with the symptomatic individual.

Asymptomatic household contacts of symptomatic individuals: Quarantine, do not leave home, even for essential reasons.

- All asymptomatic household contacts of symptomatic individuals are required to quarantine, **without exemption, even for essential reasons**, until the symptomatic individual receives a negative COVID-19 test result, or an alternative diagnosis by a health care professional.
- If the symptomatic individual does not seek COVID-19 testing they should be treated as if they have COVID-19 and all household contacts must quarantine for 14 days from their last contact with that symptomatic individual.

The provincial school and child care screening tool has been updated to provide this direction. Parents and guardians must screen their child each day before going to school or child care. The screening tool is available online at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/school-screening/>. Grade 9-12 students must also verify once they arrive at school that they have completed the daily screen. Please see the attached FAQ document to help answer some of your questions.

The Ministry of Education is also implementing a new requirement for asymptomatic testing in a limited number of schools each week. Northwestern Health Unit will support school boards with decision making about asymptomatic testing.

I would like to thank parents, guardians, educators, school staff, and the broader community who have been practising prevention measures over the course of the pandemic. Together we will adapt, and together we will be proud of our collective efforts to keep our schools and daycares safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Young Hoon".

Dr. Kit Young Hoon
Medical Officer of Health
Northwestern Health Unit



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

My child has a single symptom (ex. a runny nose). When can they return to school?

Staff, students and children with any new or worsening symptom of COVID-19, **even those with only one symptom**, must stay home, **without exemption**, until:

- They receive a negative COVID-19 test result;
- They receive an alternative diagnosis by a health care professional; or
- It has been 10 days since their symptom onset and they are feeling better.

I don't have any symptoms, but a person in my house does... what should I do?

All household members need to isolate, even if they do not have any symptoms themselves. No one should leave home, even for essential reasons until the symptomatic individual receives a negative COVID-19 test result, or an alternative diagnosis by a health care professional.

What if the symptomatic person doesn't get tested?

Then they are treated as if they have COVID-19, and all household contacts must isolate for 14 days from their last contact with that symptomatic individual.

What if a person in the house is told they are a contact of someone with COVID-19, but they don't have any symptoms and neither does anyone else in the house?

Asymptomatic household contacts of asymptomatic individuals who are high-risk contacts should stay at home, except for essential reasons.

- If an asymptomatic individual is directed to self-isolate as a high risk contact of a positive COVID-19 case, their asymptomatic household members should stay home for 14 days except for essential reasons. In this case, attending school, child care or work is allowable for the household contacts as an **essential activity**, as long as everyone in the household remains asymptomatic.
- Example: An asymptomatic teacher has a child in their household who has been directed to self-isolate because they were in a classroom with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 (i.e., the child is a high risk contact). As long as the teacher and child are both asymptomatic, the teacher can continue to go to work (i.e., school), but should not leave home for other non-essential reasons for 14 days. The child, as a high risk contact, should stay home as directed, and not attend school.