



Monday, January 3, 2022

Dear York Region School Administrators and Child Care Operators,

On Thursday December 30, 2021, the provincial government announced updates to COVID-19 case, contact and outbreak management so public health efforts can be focused on the highest risk settings to protect our most vulnerable residents. Schools and child care are no longer considered highest-risk settings and, as a result, there are a number of changes to the management of COVID-19 cases in these settings.

## KEY UPDATES

1. Effective immediately, schools and child care settings are no longer required to report cases of COVID-19 to York Region Public Health
2. York Region Public Health **will no longer be dismissing cohorts** in school or child care settings and will not be involved in the management of COVID-19 exposures
3. COVID-19 testing is no longer available to symptomatic individuals in the general population; if an individual is symptomatic with one or more major symptom(s) or two or more other symptoms (See Table 1), they should isolate as outlined below in Table 2; **confirmatory testing will not be readily available, and symptomatic individuals should assume they have COVID-19**
4. Enhanced cohorting: To mitigate risks associated with the colder weather and gatherings/travel over the winter holidays and to limit the number of contacts for more vulnerable populations, elementary students will be required to cohort during recess and outdoor breaks, limiting contacts as much as possible during this period
5. Sports and extra-curricular activities will be paused; indoor high contact and high intensity activities, such as wrestling or basketball, multi-cohort choirs and wind instrument ensembles, will be paused temporarily to ensure the health and well-being of students

In addition to the above key updates, **York Region Public Health is requiring the use of masks for all JK/SK students attending schools in York Region.** Masks are one of the most critical ways to mitigate risk of COVID-19 transmission.

## COVID-19 SCREENING REMINDERS

As York Region Public Health is no longer actively managing cases and dismissing cohorts, screening for ill students and staff is more important than ever. All staff and students **must self-screen** for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 **every day** before attending school or child care.

Screening **MUST** be completed **DAILY** using the [COVID-19 school and child care screening tool](#); parents and guardians must not send children to school or child care if they are showing any symptoms of COVID-19. The provincial guidance requires onsite confirmation of screening. Boards/schools and child care operators can determine the most appropriate and efficient way to confirm screening.

If an individual is symptomatic with one or more major symptom, or two or more other symptoms in Table 1, they must isolate regardless of vaccination status. Household members must isolate as well.

**Table 1. Major and Other COVID-19 Symptoms**

<b>Major Symptom (one or more)</b>	<b>Other Symptoms (two or more)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever/chills</li> <li>• Cough</li> <li>• Shortness of breath</li> <li>• Decrease/loss of smell and taste</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sore throat</li> <li>• Headache</li> <li>• Extreme fatigue</li> <li>• Runny nose/nasal congestion</li> <li>• Muscle aches/joint pain</li> <li>• Gastrointestinal symptoms (i.e., vomiting or diarrhea)</li> </ul>

**Table 2. Isolation Requirements if Symptomatic with Symptoms from Table 1**

	<b>Symptomatic Individual is Fully Vaccinated OR Under 12 Years of Age</b>	<b>Symptomatic Individual is 12 Years or Older AND Not Fully Vaccinated or Immune Compromised</b>
<b>Symptomatic Individual</b>	Isolate for 5 days <b>and</b> must be fever free with symptoms improving for at least 24 hours (48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms)	Isolate for 10 days <b>and</b> must be fever free with symptoms improving for at least 24 hours (48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms)
<b>Household Contacts</b>	All household members (regardless of their vaccination status) will need to self-isolate. Review the Ministry of Health - <a href="#">COVID-19 Integrated Testing &amp; Case, Contact and Outbreak Management Interim Guidance: Omicron Surge</a> for more information	All household members (regardless of their vaccination status) will need to self-isolate. Review the Ministry of Health - <a href="#">COVID-19 Integrated Testing &amp; Case, Contact and Outbreak Management Interim Guidance: Omicron Surge</a> for more information

**School and Child Care Attendance After Travel**

- If a student/child/essential visitor or staff member has travelled outside of Canada and is not fully vaccinated, they must stay home from school until the required 14-day self-isolation period has finished; if the traveller does not develop any symptoms, household members can continue to attend school and child care

- Children under 12 travelling with fully vaccinated parents/guardians do not need to quarantine, in alignment with the exemptions for quarantine under the [Federal Quarantine Act](#), however they must not attend school or child care for 14 days
- If a student/child/visitor or staff member has travelled outside of Canada and **is fully vaccinated**, as outlined by the Government of Canada, the individual can self-monitor for symptoms but does not need to quarantine (in alignment with the exemptions for quarantine under *the Federal Quarantine Act*); if symptoms develop the individual should isolate and seek testing immediately

## VACCINATION

COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective and the best way to protect you and those around you from serious illness, hospitalization and death from COVID-19.

York Region Public Health encourages all individuals five years of age and older to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Visit [york.ca/COVID19Vaccine](http://york.ca/COVID19Vaccine) to learn more and find a vaccine clinic.

## PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

Please continue to ensure all students and staff to continue to follow other public health measures including:

- Physical distancing
- Regular hand hygiene
- Wear a mask
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces
- Screening for symptoms every day
- Staying home when feeling unwell

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

We expect you will have questions as you work to implement these changes in your school and child care settings. We encourage you to visit [www.york.ca/safeatschool](http://www.york.ca/safeatschool) for up-to-date information on COVID-19 guidance for school and child care settings or visit [www.york.ca/COVID19](http://www.york.ca/COVID19) for additional information about COVID-19.

If you do not find the answer to your inquiry on our website or by reviewing the guidance documents provided by the Ministry of Education, you can reach out to our School, Child Care and Day Program Intake Line at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 76681 or email our general inbox at [SchoolServices@york.ca](mailto:SchoolServices@york.ca). This intake line and inbox are monitored 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Sunday to Friday (closed Saturdays). As York Region Public Health continues to prioritize vaccination efforts and case, contact and outbreak management in highest-risk settings, there may be a delay in responding to your inquiries. We ask for your patience with us as we work to respond as quickly as we can.

Thank you for doing your part to keep our school communities safe. We appreciate your ongoing partnership.

Sincerely,

York Region Public Health