



Halton Region Public Health
1151 Bronte Road
Oakville ON L6M 3L1

September 1, 2022

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As we start another new school year during the pandemic, Halton Region Public Health would like to share an update on COVID-19 health and safety measures for schools and COVID-19 vaccines for school-aged children.

COVID-19 Health and Safety Measures for Schools

Halton Region Public Health will continue to work closely with school boards to limit the spread of COVID-19 in schools, support students' well-being, and ensure their health and safety remain a top priority. While most protective measures have been lifted, several remain, including:

- Practicing good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
- Recommended daily screening every morning before getting ready for school
- Mask requirements after isolation or for close contacts
- Continued access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs)
- Monitoring of school absenteeism rates

These protective measures are strengthened by rising rates of child and youth COVID-19 vaccinations.

Isolation Guidelines

Staff, students and visitors should self-screen every day before attending school using the [school and child care screening tool](#).

- All individuals who have COVID-19 symptoms
 - Should **stay home** until they have no fever and symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastro-intestinal symptoms)
 - After isolating, **wear a mask** when out in public (including schools and childcare, unless under 2 years old) for 10 days from when symptoms started
 - **Avoid non-essential activities** where mask removal is necessary (e.g., dining out, playing a wind instrument, swimming, high contact sports where masks cannot be safely worn) for 10 days from when symptoms started
 - **Avoid non-essential visits** to vulnerable individuals at risk of severe infection and highest risk settings (e.g., hospitals, long-term care) for 10 days from when symptoms started
 - Follow this advice whether tested for COVID-19 or not, and whether test is positive or not
 - Speak with their healthcare provider to check if they are eligible for COVID-19 treatments and how to get tested and access treatment if eligible

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- Immunocompromised individuals are still recommended to isolate for 10 days from symptom-onset or positive test date.
- **Individuals who test positive but are asymptomatic** do not have to isolate. They should wear a mask and avoid vulnerable individuals and highest-risk settings for 10 days from test date.
- **Close contacts who remain asymptomatic do not have isolation requirements** based on vaccination status. All close contacts are advised to wear a mask and avoid vulnerable individuals and highest risk settings for 10 days from last exposure.

Masking Guidelines

Masking is not required for students, staff, and visitors in schools, school board offices, or on student transportation; however, masking in indoor settings and crowded spaces is still encouraged. Public Health strongly encourages our school communities to actively promote respectful and inclusive environments for individuals who choose to wear a mask or not.

Masking will be required in the following circumstances:

- All symptomatic individuals when they return to school after isolation whether they have tested for COVID-19 or not, should wear a mask when out in public for 10 days from when symptoms started
- Asymptomatic individuals who test positive for COVID-19 should wear a mask for 10 days from test date
- All close contacts who remain asymptomatic should wear a mask for 10 days from their last exposure

Absenteeism reporting

Schools are not required to report on absenteeism rates to Public Health, but they must continue to monitor their absence rates and collaborate closely with Halton Region Public Health if they experience high absenteeism due to reported illness. Halton Region Public Health has a process to review absence data and is ready to provide schools with additional guidance and support, including suggested resources for communication with students, staff and families.

COVID-19 Vaccines for School-aged Children

COVID-19 vaccination remains one of the most effective measures to ensure our children and school communities are safe. Although COVID-19 symptoms in children can be mild, some children, even those without underlying health conditions, can develop more severe disease requiring hospitalization. We encourage parents and guardians to [book a COVID-19 vaccination appointment for their children](#).

Here is some key information regarding the COVID-19 vaccine for children:

- Children six months and older are eligible to receive their COVID-19 vaccine.
- **Children five to 11 years of age can now get their first booster dose** at the recommended interval of six months (or 168 days) after their second dose.

- Children who are immunocompromised and received a three-dose primary series are recommended to receive their first booster dose 6 months (or 168 days) after their third dose.
- Youth 12-17 years of age are also recommended to receive a first booster dose six months (or 168 days) after completion of a primary series of the COVID-19 vaccine.
 - Youth who are immunocompromised and received a three-dose primary series are recommended to receive their second booster dose 6 months (or 168 days) after their first booster dose.
- Make sure your child gets all recommended doses including boosters to prevent severe illness and hospitalization. Use our [online Dose Calculator](#) to find out when your child is recommended to get their next dose.
- Children who had a previous COVID-19 infection are recommended to get vaccinated. Children who previously had COVID-19 will have some natural immunity, but this protection is strengthened if they are vaccinated. Learn more about [when your child should get vaccinated if they've had COVID-19](#).

Book your child's vaccine appointment online at a [Halton Region COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic](#) today. Families can also visit [participating pharmacies](#), [Provincial clinics available through the Provincial Booking System](#), [GO-VAXX bus stops \(5+ only\)](#) or [participating primary care & paediatric providers](#).

When making the decision to vaccinate your child, make sure to get your information from reliable sources. Visit halton.ca/covidvaccines4kids to find trusted resources. You can also:

- Book a confidential phone appointment with a SickKids Registered Nurse through [The SickKids COVID-19 Vaccine Consult Service](#) or call 1-888-304-6558.
- Contact the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre to speak to an experienced agent or health specialist at 1-833-943-3900 (TTY for people who are deaf, hearing-impaired or speech-impaired: 1-866-797-0007).

To learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine for children and tips on preparing for your child's vaccination, please visit halton.ca/covidvaccines4kids.

We are hopeful for a seamless 2022-2023 school year. As we navigate living with COVID-19, Halton Region Public Health will remain vigilant and continue to monitor the need to reintroduce additional measures in schools and the general community.

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to keep our families and school communities safe. We look forward to a successful and healthy school year.

Sincerely,

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