

August 31, 2021

Dear parent or guardian,

As part of a strategy to help keep COVID out of school, schools in East Toronto will have access to take-home self-collection testing kits to make it easier for students, staff and their household members to get tested for COVID-19. You can pick up a testing kit by contacting your school.

Take-home testing kits will be kept at the school and can be provided to families and staff:

- 1) if and when your child or anyone in your household has **symptoms** of COVID-19 or
- 2) if they are sent home after another individual in their class has tested positive for COVID-19.

Since we cannot tell the difference between a common cold and COVID-19 the test is essential to identify if those symptoms are due to COVID-19 and also get your child back to school sooner if they test negative.

The quicker we can identify individuals with COVID-19, the better equipped we are to contain further spread of the virus. The take-home COVID-19 test can be self-administered by your child with the support of a parent or guardian, and our hope is to make it as simple and fast as possible for families to access COVID-19 testing and get results in a timely manner.

Method of testing:

In the testing kit, you will find an oral nasal swab that can be used to administer the COVID-19 test. The tests in the kits are exactly the same quality lab-based PCR tests that would be done if your child came to the assessment centre. These tests are not the “rapid tests” which have different test characteristics.

We have attached a sample instruction sheet for the tests, and a quick video can be found here www.tehn.ca/OralNasalSwab. By using a take home test, we hope to reduce any potential barriers to getting a COVID-19 test, be it booking online, coordinating travel or waiting in line. With the take home test, you can easily self-collect the sample and then drop off the test to a local MGH testing site in your community. If you prefer to have a healthcare professional administer the test please come to a local MGH testing site and we will be happy to perform the test.

Timing of the test:

If your child has **symptoms** please do the test and drop it off to a testing site **as soon as possible**. If your child has no symptoms and you have been notified that your child has been exposed please wait for further instructions from your school or Toronto Public health on when to do the test. Generally, if your child is unvaccinated and has no symptoms, it is recommended to do the test about **7 days** after your child was potentially **exposed** to COVID-19. If you are able to do the test twice then ideally the test would be done as soon as you are informed of the exposure AND at about 7 days after. If the test is done too early after an exposure it may miss an infection and it would be recommended the testing be repeated if negative.

Supports:

If you or someone in your family tests positive, a medical professional will call you to help you manage your symptoms. There are also community and government supports available to help you with things like income assistance and groceries if you need to self-isolate.

Thank you,

*Janine McCreedy, MD, FRCPC
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