

Dr. Eileen de Villa
Medical Officer of Health**Public Health**
277 Victoria Street
5th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M5B 1W2Reply to: 416-338-7600
publichealth@toronto.ca
www.toronto.ca/covid19

February 8, 2021

Re: Return to in-person learning at school

Dear School Staff:

Schools in Toronto are planning to re-open for in-person learning on February 16, 2021. Toronto Public Health (TPH) has important reminders as you prepare to return to school.

How to prepare for return to in-person learning:

- **Daily screening:** Starting today for everyone in your household complete the **updated** COVID-19 symptom screening for [students](#) and [adults](#) every day.
- **Get tested:** If anyone in your household has one or more new or worsening symptoms of COVID-19, they should [get tested](#) as soon as possible. More [pop-up testing sites](#) will be made available this week through our testing partners.
- **Stay-at-home except to attend work:** Continue to support stay-at-home measures in order to reduce community transmission. Lower transmission in the community will help to keep schools as safe as possible. Stay at home except for work, essential shopping, outdoor exercise or healthcare appointments. Limit contact outside of work to only the people you live with.

When at school for in-person learning:

- **Confirmation of screening:** Complete your screening every day before school, and confirm with school administration that it has been completed. Do not attend school if you are sick.
- **Follow prevention measures:** Wash or sanitize your hands frequently, stay at least six feet/two metres from others as much as possible, wear a well-fitting mask, stay home if you are sick, and follow your school's Occupational Health and Safety procedures.
- **Mask breaks:** When taking short mask breaks outdoors or indoors or to eat lunch/snacks, ensure that physical distancing is maintained.
- **Stay-at-home except to attend school:** Staff can attend school daily but should not gather with colleagues. Continue to support stay-at-home measures in order to keep schools as safe as possible. Stay home except to attend school or for essential shopping, outdoor exercise, or healthcare appointments. Limit contact outside of school to only people you live with. If you live alone you can have contact with one other household.
- **When you are sick stay at home:** Staff will need to stay home from school if they have a COVID-19 symptom or if someone in their household has a COVID-19 symptom. Staff can return to school when the sick individual receives a negative test and symptoms are improving.

COVID-19 continues to circulate in our community and TPH is prepared to respond if COVID-19 is detected related to the school. We have increased our capacity to do full case and contact investigations, co-ordinate testing when a cohort is dismissed, and communicate with schools and families about what they need to do.

TPH will continue to work with schools, staff and parents to keep schools safe, including:

- When a staff member or student who attends school tests positive, TPH will identify their close contacts using the cohort approach. Staff and students may belong to a classroom, bus or before/after school cohort. These cohorts will be dismissed from school and directed to self-isolate for 14 days from last contact with the case. This message may come from your Principal or from TPH.
- If you are identified as a close contact, you will receive a letter from TPH. The letter will recommend testing even if you are not sick, and include the date that you must self-isolate at home. It will also include information about where to get tested. Please bring your letter to the testing site as the letter includes a unique identification number, which will help TPH to complete the investigation.
- TPH may recommend expanded testing for the entire school if there are: a) multiple cohorts who were dismissed; or b) there is someone who had COVID-19 related to the school setting and we are not clear on where the person got COVID-19. TPH will provide a letter to staff to provide details on the expanded testing clinics.
- Testing is completed by testing centres, not TPH. We are working with testing centres to reduce barriers to getting tested. This may include dedicated hours at an assessment centre for school students and staff, on-site school testing or take-home test kits.
- If you develop a new or worsening symptom of COVID-19, you should be tested as soon as possible. Please bring your letter to the testing site as the letter may include a unique identification number, which will help TPH complete the investigation.

Thank you for all that you are doing to help keep our schools and communities safe. Please continue to visit our website at: www.toronto.ca/COVID19 to stay up-to-date. Information specific to school communities is available at: [COVID-19-guidance-educational-institutions](https://www.toronto.ca/covid-19-guidance-educational-institutions).

Yours truly,



Nicole Welch
Director
COVID-19 Liaison
Chief Nursing Officer