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## Re: Toronto Public Health Back-to-School Information

Dear Parent/Guardian,

As you prepare your child for a healthy and successful 2024-2025 school year, here is some important information from Toronto Public Health (TPH) to help support you.

## **Reducing the Spread of Communicable Diseases**

To help protect our school communities, staff, students, and visitors are reminded to:

- Stay home if they are sick or have symptoms of illness.
- Wash or sanitize their hands often.
- Cover their cough or sneeze with their elbow or a tissue.
- Stay up to date on vaccinations:
  - Your child needs to be up to date with vaccinations, as outlined in Ontario's <u>Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA)</u>, or have a valid exemption.
    - This includes vaccinations for measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, tetanus, polio, pertussis (whopping cough), meningococcal and varicella (chicken pox).
    - Toronto is seeing an increase in <u>pertussis (whopping cough)</u>, similar to what is being reported across Ontario and Canada. Infection from this vaccine preventable disease starts like a common cold, with mild fever, runny nose, red watery eyes and a mild cough. It can then turn into coughing fits that last weeks or even months.
    - Vaccines are available through your primary care provider or at a <u>TPH vaccination</u> clinic. Appointments can be made at tphbookings.ca.
    - Vaccinations need to be reported to TPH using <u>Immunization Connect Ontario</u> (ICON).
  - Students in grade 7 and 8 will be offered the hepatitis B, human papillomavirus (HPV) and meningococcal vaccines in school through TPH's <u>School Immunization Program (SIP)</u>.
    - Students in grades 9 to 12 who have missed these vaccines can still get them for free at a <u>TPH vaccination clinic</u>.
  - Updated COVID-19 and influenza (flu) vaccines will be available this fall.
    - Both vaccines will be important to prevent serious illness from these viruses during peak respiratory illness season.

## **Dental Screening Program**

TPH's <u>Dental & Oral Health Services</u> staff will be conducting dental screening in elementary schools. For children with identified dental care needs, TPH will assist families with finding a dental provider and will provide information about good oral health habits.

# **Heat Safety Tips**

Hot weather can put your child's health at risk. Infants and young children are at greater risk for heat related illnesses. Some tips to beat the heat when outside include:

- Drink plenty of water, even before you feel thirsty.
- Wear loose, light-coloured, breathable clothing and when outdoors wear a wide-brimmed hat.
- Avoid the sun and stay in the shade or use an umbrella.
- Reschedule or plan outdoor exercise (e.g., run, walk, bike) during the cooler parts of the day (morning or evening).

Spending time in a cool space can help protect against the effects of hot weather. To find a place to stay cool, visit toronto.ca/KeepCool. Visit the Staying Healthy in Hot Weather webpage for more information.

#### School Health Services

TPH's team of health professionals work to serve school communities using the Healthy Schools approach, based on the Ontario Ministry of Education's <u>Foundations for a Healthy School</u>. Our School Liaison Public Health Nurses (SLPHNs) provide consultation, resources, referrals and other supports to Toronto schools.

## **More Information**

Stay tuned for more information via your child's school principal or visit toronto.ca/health to learn more about:

- Healthy Schools
- Health Information for School Age Parents & Caregivers
- Immunizations
- Mental health resources
- Respiratory viruses
- Sexual health promotion resources to support parents and caregivers
- Vaping

## Questions?

Contact TPH at <a href="mailto:publichealth@toronto.ca">publichealth@toronto.ca</a> or 416-338-7600, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Service is available in multiple languages.

Wishing you and your family a happy and healthy school year ahead.

Sincerely,

Joanne Figliano-Scott

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Acting Chief Nursing Officer

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