

MEMORANDUM

TO: Schools and Child Care Centres in Niagara Region

FROM: Niagara Region Public Health

Subject: Update on Niagara Specific Guidance for COVID-19 in the School and Child Care Settings

DATE: October 9, 2020

Good afternoon,

Please see an updated communication below from Niagara Region Public Health related to COVID-19 for children in school and child care.

ACTIVE SCREENING, ESPECIALLY FOR ADULTS (E.G. STAFF, ESSENTIAL VISITORS), IS THE BEST LINE OF DEFENSE FOR PREVENTING COVID-19 IN THE SCHOOL OR CHILD CARE SETTING.

Please go to <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/school-screening/> for the most up to date screening tool for children, students of elementary and secondary schools, and school or child care employees (e.g. teachers, bus drivers, custodians, office staff). We recommend that this tool be used for screening by all children, students, and employees attending schools, child care centres and licensed home child care programs. The online screening tool will not keep a record of the results; so, where required, child care centres and schools will need to devise their own record-keeping system.

Symptomatic Children/Students

If a child has **one or more** new or worsening symptom from:

Group 1 Symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Decrease or loss of smell or taste

They must **self-isolate at home** immediately and they then have a choice of the following options:

Options:

- Contact their health care provider, walk-in clinic, online virtual clinic for guidance (which can be provided over the phone) **OR**
- Contact a [Niagara Health COVID-19 Assessment Centre](#) to book an appointment for testing

- If they have remaining questions about COVID-19, they can contact the [Public Health Info-Line](#) at 905-688-8248 press 7 then press 4, or chat online

If a child has no symptoms from **GROUP 1** and **only one** new or worsening symptom from Group 2:

Group 2 Symptoms:

- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Headache
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Fatigue, lethargy, or muscle aches

THEN, they need to self-isolate at home immediately, but can wait 24 hours to see if there is improvement before doing anything further. If the **single symptom improves** after 24 hours, the child **may return to school or child care** when they feel well enough, without an assessment or test.

If the symptom stays the same or worsens OR they have two or more symptoms from Group 2, then they should follow the **OPTIONS** outlined above.

Symptomatic Staff/Adults

If a staff member or other adult develops symptoms, including [any single new or worsening symptom](#), they must always remain home and follow one of the following **OPTIONS**:

- Contact their health care provider, walk-in clinic, online virtual clinic for guidance (which can be provided over the phone) **OR**
- Contact a [Niagara Health COVID-19 Assessment Centre](#) to book an appointment for testing
- If there are remaining questions about COVID-19, contact the [Public Health Info-Line](#) at 905-688-8248 press 7 then press 4, or chat online.

Siblings and Other Household Members of a Symptomatic Individual

- If a test is recommended by a health care provider for the symptomatic person, or a decision is made to pursue testing at an assessment centre, all household members are to self-isolate at least until the test results are back. If the test is negative, household members can leave self-isolation.
- If the test is positive, household members must stay in self-isolation and will receive further direction from Public Health.
- Obtaining an assessment (even over the phone) from a health care provider may take some time. Household members with no symptoms do not need to self-isolate immediately after a child develops symptoms. They can wait up to 24 hours until a decision is made about whether testing is needed. However, if it takes longer than 24 hours to obtain an assessment, all household members must self-isolate until a decision is made.

- If a health care provider then advises that a test for COVID-19 is not needed, household members can leave self-isolation.
- When there is a symptomatic child in a household, it is important that special attention is given to all adults in the household. If any adults have **even one symptom of COVID-19**, or recently had one or more symptoms and were not tested, they should self-refer for testing as soon as possible or contact the Public Health Info-Line if there are remaining questions.
- These procedures around self-isolation of household members also apply to home child care providers and / or any residents of the home, and will result in temporary closure of the home child care. For example, if a spouse of a home child care provider has symptoms.

Children who require an assessment for testing based on their symptom(s) (i.e. having one or more symptoms from Group 1 OR two or more symptoms from Group 2 OR one symptom from Group 2 that doesn't improve or worsens after 24 hours) are not permitted to return to school, child care, or go to any public setting until one of the following criteria is met:

- They get advice from a health care provider that COVID-19 is very unlikely AND
 - They have not had any symptoms for 24 hours OR
 - It has been 10 days since their symptoms started (whichever is shorter). They also must not have a fever, without use of fever reducing medications (e.g. Advil®, Tylenol®, Ibuprofen, Acetaminophen), and be feeling better.
- They get advice from a health care provider that the symptom or symptoms are related to a chronic or pre-existing condition (e.g. allergies, post-nasal drip, migraines, asthma). In this case, they can return to the school/child care once they feel well enough, without waiting for symptoms to resolve.
- They had a test that was negative for COVID-19 AND
 - It has been 24 hours since symptoms have gone away completely OR
 - It has been 10 days since symptoms started (whichever is shorter). They also must not have a fever, without use of fever reducing medications (e.g. Advil®, Tylenol®, Ibuprofen, Acetaminophen), and be feeling better.
- Completion of 10 days of self-isolation since the day that the symptoms began. They also must not have a fever, without use of fever reducing medications (e.g. Advil®, Tylenol®, Ibuprofen, Acetaminophen), and be feeling better. This includes individuals who have chosen not to be tested.

For adults with any minor symptom, get tested and the whole household is to isolate until the test results come back.

Additional Notes:

- Public health professionals will provide further direction and support to anyone with a positive COVID-19 lab result, as well as their close contacts, if warranted.
- Checking temperature to screen for fever can be performed at home before arriving at the child care centre or school

- If testing for COVID-19 was declined for any reason, the individual and their entire household are to stay home and self-isolate for 10 days from the day the symptomatic person's symptoms started. They also must not have a fever, without use of fever reducing medications (e.g. Advil®, Tylenol®, Ibuprofen, Acetaminophen), and be feeling better, before returning.
 - **NOTE:** If others in the household develop symptoms or recently had symptoms, especially adults, it is important that they get tested as soon as possible and/or contact the Public Health Info-Line if there are remaining questions.

As guidance changes regularly, please visit our www.niagararegion.ca/health for the most up-to-date guidance or call the Public Health Info-Line at 905-688-8248 press 7 then press 4, or chat online.

Thank you so much for everything you have been and continue doing to help people in Niagara stay healthy.