

## Niagara Specific Guidance;

# COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions for the 2021-2022 School Year

Below is a summary of the key advice Niagara Region Public Health is recommending for the 2021-2022 school year. Schools will likely be the largest gathering of unvaccinated persons in our community and it is therefore our top priority to protect the safety and well being of all children in these settings.

### Who needs to wear a mask?

- Students in grades 1-12 are required to wear masks while indoors and masks are recommended outdoors when physical distancing cannot be maintained
- With parental permission, it is **recommended** that children two years of age through to senior kindergarten are encouraged to wear a mask indoors when tolerated
- Staff members are required to wear a medical mask in school at all times
- Eye protection is not required for education staff working with students who wear masks
- Both medical mask and eye protection (goggles or face shield) are required for educational staff when in close contact with students who are not wearing masks

## Screening & Symptoms

### Active Screening

Before school entry, every staff, student, visitor, and contractor who enter the school setting are required to complete active screening for COVID-19 symptoms and schools are required to monitor such compliance. Only individuals who have completed and passed screening will be allowed to enter the school.

### What happens if a staff member, student or visitor fails the screening tool?

If a child, staff member or visitor is experiencing any of the following symptoms they are not allowed to enter the school:

Symptom	Action
From the <a href="#">Ministry screening tool</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fever/chills</li><li>• New cough or a cough that is getting worse</li><li>• Shortness of breath (even when sitting or walking regularly)</li><li>• Nausea/Vomiting, diarrhea or loss of appetite</li><li>• Loss of sense of taste and/or smell</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Self-isolate immediately</li><li>• Contact the Niagara Health COVID-19 Assessment Centre to book an appointment for testing; this can be done <a href="#">on-line</a> or by calling 905-378-4647 ext. 42819 OR</li><li>• Contact their health care provider for a medical assessment if symptoms are due to a another condition</li></ul>

Symptom	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Runny nose and/or nasal congestion</li> <li>• Sore throat</li> <li>• Unusual level of fatigue (feeling weak, tired, exhausted)</li> <li>• Feeling unwell for an unknown reason</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remain home from school until their symptoms have resolved or are improving for 24 hours</li> <li>• A COVID-19 test is recommended prior to returning to school.</li> </ul>

## What happens if a child passed the screening tool BUT becomes ill at school?

The staff will immediately bring the child with symptoms into a separate room (if possible) until someone is able to come pick them up from school

## A child just got the vaccine and is having symptoms, can they go to school or do they need to stay home?

Within 48 hours (two days) after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine	More than 48 hours (two days) after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine
<p>If the child develops any of the following symptoms within 48 hours (two days) after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine, they may continue to attend school or childcare as long as they wear a medical grade mask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headache</li> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Muscle Ache</li> <li>• Joint pain</li> </ul>	<p>If child has a fever or develops symptoms that continue after 48 hours (two days), the child must self-isolate immediately and get tested for COVID-19.</p>
<p>For any other symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g. cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell), even if they are mild, the child is to self-isolate immediately and get tested.</p>	

## What if a child's symptoms persist or worsen?

- The symptomatic child is to remain home from school
- A repeat COVID-19 test should be considered
- The parent or guardian is to follow-up with a health care provider or call 911 if experiencing shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chest pain or pressure, new confusion, or difficulty waking up

## What if it's recommended for a child to self-isolate away from household members, but this is NOT possible due to age or other reasons?

- Household members who are **not fully vaccinated\*** are to self-isolate 10 days from their last interaction with the child

### COVID-19 Info-Line

905-688-8248 press 7 Toll-free: 1-888-505-6074  
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- If self-isolation away from household members is not possible, household members who are **not fully vaccinated\*** are to self-isolate for the duration of the child's illness, and then for an additional 10 days from last interaction with the symptomatic child
- If household members become symptomatic, they should consult their health care provider and/or go for testing

## What does it mean for other members of the household when a child is symptomatic and is getting a COVID-19 test?

- All household members who are **not fully vaccinated\*** are to self-isolate until the test results are back
- If the test result is negative, household members can leave self-isolation. If the test is positive, household members who are not fully vaccinated are to self-isolate for 10 days from their last interaction with the child who has symptoms.
- Household members who are **fully vaccinated\* OR** were previously positive within the past 90 days and have since been cleared, are **not** required to self-isolate and may attend work/school/child care as long as they remain symptom-free
- If a health care provider advises that a COVID-19 test is not needed, household members can leave self-isolation

## What if a child is part of an isolating cohort, do their siblings need to self isolate?

If a child in a home is a high risk contact from someone who tested positive, other children in the home can continue to attend school, as long as all household members remain symptom free.

## What does a family need to know when a child is identified as a high risk contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case?

- If the child is **not fully vaccinated\***, they must **isolate for 10 days**
- If the child is **fully vaccinated\* OR** if they were previously positive within the past 90 days and recovered, they do not have to self-isolate as long as they remain symptom-free
- **Testing is recommended on day 7 to ALL high risk contacts, regardless if you are vaccinated or not**
- If the child is **not fully vaccinated\*** and testing is declined, isolation may be **extended**, as directed by Niagara Region Public Health
- Niagara Region Public Health will follow up with **ALL** cases who test positive. Public Health will also determine isolation and return to school dates for the vaccinated and unvaccinated high risk contacts
- Medical notes or proof of negative tests should not be required for the child to return to School

## A child is symptomatic but tested **NEGATIVE** for COVID-19 or received an alternate diagnosis by a health care provider. When can the child return to school?

They have been free of a fever for over 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications

**AND** They have been free of vomiting or diarrhea for over 48 hours

**AND** Other symptoms have mostly improved for at least 24 hours

**AND** They have not been directed to self isolate

**AND** Had no contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19

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\* **fully vaccinated** - A person is fully vaccinated against COVID-19 if they have met the following:

- » The full series of a COVID-19 vaccine authorized by Health Canada, or any combination of such vaccines, **OR**
- » One or two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health Canada, followed by one dose of a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine authorized by Health Canada, **OR**
- » Three doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health Canada; **AND**
- » They received their final dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at least 14 days ago.

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## CONTACT NIAGARA REGION PUBLIC HEALTH

For further questions/concerns and/or support contact our Niagara Region Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Info-Line:

Talk to a public health professional Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.

- 905-688-8248 or 1-888-505-6074, press 7
- [Chat online](#) in 90 different languages with auto-translate
- [COVID-19 Info-Line wait times](#)
- [Physicians and primary care providers](#)
- For vaccine information, call the Provincial Vaccine Information Line at 1-888-999-6488. This line is for questions only, not to book your vaccine. Service is available in 300 languages.

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