



# COVID-19 Information for Schools on the Return to In-person Learning

JANUARY 2022

## How will a student or staff know if it's safe to attend school?

- All students and staff must self-screen for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 EVERY DAY before attending school using the [COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening Tool](#). Note that this screening tool was recently updated. If a printed copy is used, it is important to ensure that it is the current version.

## What if a student has COVID-19 symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19?

- Parents should use the [COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening Tool](#) to assess the child's symptoms and follow all instructions.
- If a person does not pass the screening tool, they (and their household members) must follow the self-isolation instructions provided. These instructions are also available at [COVID-19.ontario.ca/exposed](#) and in flowcharts posted at [TBDHU.com/covidexposure](#)
- It is the parent/caregiver's responsibility to:
  - notify the child's close contacts and complete the required isolation time. Information for close contacts is available at [COVID-19.ontario.ca/exposed](#) and in flowcharts posted at [TBDHU.com/covidexposure](#)
  - Inform the child's school of the absence, (but they are not required to report results of positive tests to the school or to TBDHU).

## What if a student has a known health condition that has symptoms similar to COVID-19?

- Assessing for symptoms of COVID-19 should focus on evaluating what is new, worsening, or different from the child's baseline health status or usual state.
- If the symptoms are from a known health condition diagnosed by a healthcare provider (not related to COVID-19), the student/staff does not have to self-isolate.
- If the symptoms are new, different, or worsening, the student/staff should stay home and self-isolate.

## Who is considered a close contact?

- A close contact is anyone who was less than two metres away for at least 15 minutes, or who had multiple contacts for shorter lengths of time, without wearing a mask in the 48 hours before symptoms began or a positive test result, whichever came first.
- School classmates who were following all safety measures such as keeping a physical distance and wearing a mask are generally not considered close contacts. Children may have friends that they spend time with outside of school who may be considered close contacts.
- At this time, TBDHU is following contacts who are connected to cases in high-risk settings, such as long-term care homes. Schools are not considered high-risk settings. TBDHU will no longer notify parents/caregivers if their child is a close contact of COVID-19. It is the responsibility of the person who has symptoms or tested positive (or their parent/caregiver) to inform close contacts of a possible exposure. It is not the role of the school.

### **What happens if there is a case of COVID-19 in the school?**

- Principals are responsible to report to TBDHU if there is a sharp increase in absences (approximately 30%) due to illness.
- Generally, schools will remain open to staff and students who pass the daily screen. If there are staffing shortages due to illness, schools may need to close classrooms or schools until staffing can be arranged.

### **What about COVID-19 testing?**

- RATs (rapid antigen tests) may be used when a student or staff has COVID-19 symptoms.
- Take-home PCR self-collection kits can be used at the school if a student or staff develops symptoms while at school, based on supply.
- Molecular PCR testing at an assessment centre is available to those who are [eligible](#).
- If no testing is available and a person has symptoms of COVID-19, they are to assume that they have the virus and that they are contagious. They should self-isolate with their household members and follow the guidance at [COVID-19.ontario.ca/exposed](https://www.covid-19.ontario.ca/exposed).

### **Where can I get more information?**

- Review: [Ministry of Health COVID-19: Interim Guidance for Schools and Child Care: Omicron Surge](#).
- If you do not find the answer to your inquiry, you can reach out to the TBDHU Healthy Schools Team by calling 625-5972 or emailing [covidschools@tbdhu.com](mailto:covidschools@tbdhu.com). The e-mail inbox is monitored 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday. As TBDHU continues to prioritize vaccination efforts and case, contact and outbreak management in highest-risk settings, there may be a delay in responding to your inquiries. We ask for your patience with us as we work to respond as quickly as we can.

Thank you for doing your part to keep our school communities safe. We appreciate your ongoing partnership.