

Public Health Alert

To: Ottawa Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Travel and Walk-In Clinics

Date: December 22, 2021

From: Dr Robin Taylor, Associate Medical Officer of Health
Dr Sarah Erdman, Medical Director

Subject: COVID-19 Update Dec 22 2021

La version française de cette alerte de santé publique sera publiée sur [le site Internet de SPO](#) dès qu'elle sera disponible.

Dear Colleagues,

Guidance from the Ministry of Health regarding COVID-19 is rapidly changing. Thank you for your patience. Below is a summary of recent changes. We will attempt to keep you updated as more information is available.

Testing of Health Care Workers (HCW)

The health care system and testing task force are aware of the need for expedited testing for HCW and are working on a process to facilitate this. OPH will communicate more information as it becomes available.

- Please confirm testing and isolation expectations with your health care institution if applicable

Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT)

- As access to PCR testing is currently limited, anyone who tests positive on a rapid antigen test should be considered to have COVID-19 and must self-isolate for 10 days from symptom onset or positive test date (if asymptomatic) regardless of their vaccination status.
- A confirmatory PCR test is not required while access to PCR testing remains limited.
- With widespread community circulation of COVID-19, a positive rapid antigen test is almost certainly a true positive

Self Isolation:

- Those who are self-isolating should not leave home for any reason such as to go to work, school, shopping, indoor or group exercise except to get tested for COVID-19 or for medical emergencies.

Isolation requirements (household)

If timely access to PCR testing is not available, Ottawa Public Health advises the following individuals and their household contacts to self-isolate immediately and continue to self-isolate for 10 days after the end of their exposure, after symptoms start, or after positive test, regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status:

- The individual or anyone in their household has tested positive on a COVID-19 rapid antigen test
- The individual or anyone in their household has tested positive on a COVID-19 PCR test
- The individual or anyone in their household is experiencing any of the most common symptoms of COVID-19:
fever; cough (new or worsening); shortness of breath; decrease or loss of taste or smell; extreme fatigue (not related to receiving a COVID-19 vaccine in the past 48 hours); myalgia (not related to receiving a COVID-19 vaccine in the past 48 hours); nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Symptomatic individuals must still self-isolate even if testing negative on a rapid antigen test as these tests can produce false negative results.

Isolation requirements for high-risk contacts (non-household exposure)

[Provincial guidance](#) requires the following:

- All high-risk contacts who are not fully immunized must self-isolate immediately and continue to isolate for 10 days after the end of their exposure.
- All high-risk contacts who develop symptoms of COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status, must be treated as if they have COVID-19 and self-isolate (see above).

Isolation requirements for high-risk contacts (non-household exposure, fully immunized)

[Provincial guidance](#) requires the following:

- Fully immunized, asymptomatic high-risk contacts are not required to self-isolate, unless they were exposed to COVID-19 in one of the following high-risk settings:
 - Hospitals and health care settings (including complex continuing care facilities and acute care facilities)

- Congregate living settings (e.g., long-term care facilities, retirement homes, group homes, shelters, hospices, post-secondary dormitories, temporary foreign worker setting, correctional institutions)
- Elementary school, middle school or secondary school
- Childcare centres, camps
- All high-risk contacts associated with the above high-risk exposure settings must self-isolate for 10 days (regardless of vaccination status or previously positive status) and be tested in accordance with the COVID-19 Provincial Testing Guidance, if resources permit.
- The current volume of cases means that high risk contacts will not typically be informed by OPH, but will be told by the case or another contact.

Reporting to OPH:

- Please do not report Rapid Antigen test results or patients you suspect to have COVID-19 based on symptoms / exposure history to OPH.
- Currently these patients should follow OPH instructions as if they had lab confirmed COVID-19, however they are not reported to OPH.

Please remind patients that COVID-19, in particular Omicron, often presents with minor symptoms (congestion or runny nose) or may cause no symptoms at all. Decreasing the number of people we associate with is important to control spread.