

UPDATE FROM YORK REGION PUBLIC HEALTH

September 19, 2022

Dear families:

We hope you had a safe and enjoyable summer.

Throughout the year, York Region Public Health (YRPH) provides parents and guardians up-to-date information and resources like this letter to help create a healthy child care environment and keep children, families and communities safe.

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COVID-19: WHERE ARE WE NOW AND WHAT ARE WE EXPECTING?

Well over two years into the pandemic, we are all ready to return to normal life. We know the pandemic has been hard for children and has had impacts on their education and their mental health.

Unfortunately, the pandemic is not yet over. This summer we experienced a seventh wave which impacted millions of Ontarians and continues to strain our health system. It is difficult to predict the future of this pandemic, but we are expecting another wave of COVID-19 in the late fall.

With the lifting of pandemic measures from previous years, like mandatory masking and capacity limits, we expect to see other common seasonal viruses we were used to seeing before the pandemic. Distancing and masking were effective for COVID-19, but were also effective against other respiratory viruses. These viruses are generally mild in children and most adults. However, when transmitted quickly and to many people at the same time, they can present a challenge to individuals, families and to the health system.

The advice below on screening, testing, masking, immunizations and infection prevention and control best practices, including hand washing and covering your coughs/sneezes, will help prevent illness from COVID-19 and other viruses. **Ultimately, these measures will keep your child in child care, and help keep you, your family and our community healthy.**

SYMPTOMS, SCREENING, AND TESTING

- Your child should stay home if they have any symptoms, whether they are gastrointestinal (vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain) or respiratory, and even if they

PUBLIC HEALTH

1-877-464-9675
TTY 1-866-512-6228
york.ca/COVID19

The logo for York Region, featuring a stylized white bird or wing shape above the text "York Region" in a white serif font, all set against a dark blue background with a light blue wave-like shape behind it.

York Region

test negative for COVID-19. They can return to school or child care if their symptoms have been improving for at least 24 hours (48 hours if you had nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea), and they do not have a fever and as long as they do not develop any additional symptoms

- Complete the [school and child care screening tool](#) daily
- Rapid antigen tests continue to be [available for free](#) at pharmacies and grocery stores and may be used to test for COVID-19 infection in people with symptoms
 - As a reminder, a single negative rapid antigen test in a person with symptoms does not mean they do not have COVID-19
 - It is recommended people with COVID-19 symptoms complete two tests, 24 to 48 hours apart, if their first test is negative

MASKING

- Masks work to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses and many attendees, staff and visitors may still choose to wear a mask to protect themselves or others from illness
- Although masks are not mandatory for attendees, staff, and visitors in child care settings and on buses, individuals should wear a mask in public settings, including child cares (and as tolerated by younger children) in the following situations:
 - If they are [close contacts](#) of someone with COVID-19, they should mask for 10 days from last day of exposure
 - If they are recovering from a COVID-19 infection, they should mask for 10 days from symptom start date or test date (whichever is earlier)
- Additional measures like masking may be encouraged or recommended again if a new variant emerges or if the levels of COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses show a concerning increase, especially in the winter months
- Child care settings may choose to implement their own masking policies

IMMUNIZATIONS

COVID-19 vaccines

- COVID-19 vaccines are available at [YRPH clinics, provincial vaccination clinics](#) and some [local pharmacies](#)
- We encourage everyone to get a COVID-19 vaccine. In the event of infection, vaccination will help your child fight off the virus more easily and may reduce their symptoms
- Vaccines are approved and available to all children six months of age and older
- Visit york.ca/COVID19Vaccine for more information and to book an appointment

Other routine childhood vaccinations (chickenpox, tetanus/diphtheria/polio, etc.)

- Routine childhood immunizations remain an important tool in supporting the health and safety of children and the community, and are required under the *Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA)*. Since March 2020, YRPH has not enforced the ISPA, but it is important to keep up to date and share immunization records with us
- Contact your health care provider to catch up on any vaccines you and your children may have missed
- Remember to update your child's immunization record with YRPH after they receive any vaccine

Visit york.ca/immunizations to update immunization records for routine vaccines. You can also call YRPH at 1-877-464-9675, ext. 73456 to provide an update.

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL (IPAC)

- Hand hygiene is the most effective way to prevent the spread of infection; proper handwashing with soap and water (or using hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available) is an important part of keeping ourselves and our child care settings healthy
- Always wash your hands often and well
- Respiratory etiquette such as coughing and sneezing with a mask on or into a tissue or sleeve (not their hands) if not masked, helps keep hands clean and prevents the spread of germs
- Proper cleaning and disinfection of equipment and surfaces can help prevent the spread of germs; please refer to the [cleaning and disinfection](#) poster for more information

HELPFUL YORK.CA LINKS

Visit york.ca/SafeAtSchool for more information and resources on COVID-19. For additional infection prevention and control information and resources, visit york.ca/InfectionPrevention or call Access York at 1-877-464-9675, Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

We would like to remind everyone to show kindness and consideration to others. This fall presents another opportunity for families to lead by example and show respect for each other's personal decisions and comfort levels.

Wishing you a safe and healthy fall.

Sincerely,

York Region Public Health

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON COVID-19 VACCINES

- [COVID-19 Vaccinations in York Region](#)
- York Region Public Health – [Questions and Answers for Caregivers of Children Six Months to Under Five Years of Age](#)
- Ministry of Health – [Fact Sheet for Children and Youth Five Years of Age and Older](#)
- [Max the Vax – COVID-19 Vaccine Information for Children and Caregivers](#)
- [Parents, have you done your homework?](#) Top questions about COVID-19 vaccines for kids
- [SickKids COVID-19 Vaccine Consult Service](#) - Speak directly to a health care provider about the COVID-19 Vaccine

RESOURCES

- [Current travel requirements and exemptions](#) - Government of Canada
- [School and Child Care Screening Tool](#) – Government of Ontario
- York Region Public Health:
 - [Hooray for Handwashing](#)
 - [How to correctly use hand sanitizer](#)
 - [Masks protect you and me](#)
 - [Cover your cough or sneeze | French](#)
 - [Information for Parents to Help Prevent the Spread of Illness](#)
 - [Cleaning and Disinfection Poster](#)
- York Region Public Health – Video: [Handwashing for kids](#)
- [A Public Health Guide for Child Care Providers](#)