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Dear Parent or Guardian,

Re: Returning to in-person school and COVID-19 Omicron guidance changes

As COVID-19 and the Omicron variant circulates in our community, Toronto Public Health continues to do everything possible to support schools, school boards and the provincial government in reopening schools to in-person learning. We appreciate that this is a challenging time for families with a lot of changes happening quickly.

As your local health unit, we want to be as helpful as possible. We are reaching out today to provide you key information about changes in Toronto Public Health's role based on the provincial guidance received this week, and what you can do to support your child as you prepare them for the return to in-person school.

Review the updated screening tool

The COVID-19 Screening tool has changed based on provincial guidance. Your child must be screened daily for [symptoms of COVID-19](#) and answer all questions before attending school.

Remember – do not send your child to school if they are experiencing any symptoms, even if they are mild.

When to stay home and self-isolate

Everyone in your household must stay home and self-isolate if your child or another member of the home has:

- Symptoms of COVID-19
- A positive PCR test or
- A positive rapid antigen test.

How long to self-isolate

If your child has symptom(s) they will have to self-isolate for:

- **5 days:** If the child is 12 years of age and older and fully vaccinated; or 11 years or younger regardless of vaccination status
- **10 days:** If the child is 12 years or older and not fully vaccinated; or immune compromised.

All household members must self-isolate for the same amount of time as your child. This includes siblings. For more information about self-isolation, please review page 2 of the [screening questionnaire](#) on the City of Toronto website.

Returning to School

Your child can return to school when symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours (or 48 hours if nausea/vomiting/diarrhea) and:

- Your child has completed the required self-isolation time, OR
- Your child has a negative PCR test, OR
- Your child has two negative rapid antigen tests 24 to 48 hours apart

Notify close contacts

Remember to notify all close contacts in the community with which your child had contact in the last 48 hours before your child's symptoms began or their positive test result. A close contact in the community is anyone who your child:

- Spent at least 15 minutes of time with outside of the classroom/school AND
- Where the contact was within two meters for at least 15 minutes, or multiple shorter lengths of time.

If your child is a close contact of someone with COVID-19 in the community:

If your child was identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 in the community (e.g. at an indoor gathering, playdate, indoor activity) take the following measures based on provincial requirements:

- If your child is fully vaccinated and without symptoms, they do not need to self-isolate.
- If your child is 12 years and older AND either partially vaccinated, unvaccinated OR immune compromised of any age, they must self-isolate for 10 days from the last contact with the infected person.
- If your child is 11 years and younger AND either partially vaccinated or unvaccinated, self-isolate for 5 days from the last contact with infected person.

If your child is in a classroom cohort with a positive case

Based on the new provincial guidance, being in the same classroom cohort is not considered a close contact because preventive and protective measures are in place. If a student in your child's cohort tests positive or has symptoms, you should continue to monitor your child for symptoms every day.

The new provincial guidance indicates that your child can continue to attend school if they do not have any symptoms. The province and local school boards continue to work on how best to communicate positive cases within schools with school families. There will be more information in the coming days and Toronto Public Health will continue to support schools based on all available information.

Cohort dismissals and school closures

Toronto Public Health will continue to meet with school boards and provide public health guidance to keep the school environment as safe as possible. We are working with school boards on how best to implement the new provincial direction on cohort dismissals and school closures. More information will be shared on this in the days to come.

COVID-19 Testing eligibility and availability

- PCR tests are currently being prioritized by the province for high-risk congregate settings such as hospitals, long term care centres and shelters.

- Based on provincial supply, school-based PCR testing kits may be available for a child who develops symptoms while at school.
- Rapid antigen tests provided by the province and will be distributed by the school to each child in the coming days. They can be used at home when your child has symptoms.

Masks

- Wearing a mask is an important public health measure to stop the spread of COVID-19. Please ensure your child wears a [high-quality](#), well-fitted mask when in school. If possible, send an extra mask with your child in a clean labelled bag.

COVID-19 Vaccination

- COVID-19 vaccination continues to be strongly recommended for those who are [eligible](#) and who are not fully vaccinated. School-based vaccination clinics will continue and parents and caregivers will be notified of clinics for your school. Children can also receive their COVID-19 vaccine at one of the City-run immunization clinics, hospital clinics, or one of the more than 525 participating pharmacies.
- Booster appointments are also available for individuals who are [eligible](#) and over the age of 18. Appointments can be booked by visiting the [Ontario COVID-19 Vaccination Portal](#) or by calling the Provincial Vaccine Booking Line at 1-833-943-3900. Please see Toronto Public Health's (TPH) website for more information on [How to get vaccinated](#).

If you have general questions about COVID-19, please call the Toronto Public Health Hotline at 416-338-7600, Monday to Sunday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Interpretation services are available. If you need immediate health care assistance, please call Telehealth Ontario 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-866-797-0000.

Sincerely,



Nicole Welch
Director
COVID-19 Child and Youth Response Team
Chief Nursing Officer