

COVID-19 Student and Family Holiday Safety

Updated: December 21, 2021

***To reflect new provincial gathering limits in Ontario which came into effect on Sunday, December 19, 2021.**

As we approach the holiday season, please be mindful that COVID-19 continues to spread throughout Simcoe Muskoka. We recognize the actions needed to stop the spread of COVID-19 can be very hard. However, we continue to see many situations in which school-age children are getting COVID-19 at home (from family or close friends), and in the community (through sports, social gatherings such as parties, etc.) As we get closer to the holidays it is important to continue to follow the public health safety measures listed below.

Planning for the Holidays

Knowing someone does not reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19. Virtual gatherings or events are still the safest way to celebrate.

If you choose to host or attend an in-person gathering or event, physical distancing and wearing a face covering when indoors with people who are not part of your household continues to be the safest way to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We recommend that:

- Individuals who are **not fully vaccinated** against COVID-19 should keep gatherings to only those within their household, unless physical distancing is practiced and/or face coverings are worn.
- Individuals who **are fully vaccinated** are advised to keep gatherings to a small number of people outside of their household. For the protection of all, preferably everyone should be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.
- Getting your child vaccinated is the best way to protect them from COVID-19 and to prevent them from passing the virus to grandparents or others who can get seriously ill.

In addition, the following actions can help reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Monitor for symptoms of COVID-19. People with symptoms of COVID-19 (or any other illness) should not attend gatherings, even if the symptoms are mild.
- Use outdoor spaces rather than indoor when possible.
- Do not exceed gathering limits (10 people indoors and 25 people outdoors)*.
- Limit close contacts. The fewer people at a gathering, the lower the risk of spread of COVID-19.
- Consider wearing a mask indoors, outdoors when physical distancing can not be maintained, and/or if you are in close contact with unvaccinated people from outside of your household.
- Encourage proper hand washing regularly, using soap and water or hand sanitizer.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces.
- Open windows, if possible.
- If you are hosting a gathering, ask guests to NOT attend if they have symptoms, even if they are mild.
- Make a list of guests attending in case public health needs it for contact tracing.
- If you are preparing and serving food and drinks, remember to wash your hands often and suggest all those gathered do so before and after eating.

We recognize balancing COVID-19 safety measures with social traditions around the holidays can be difficult. We want to thank you for all that you do to keep your family, and in turn our community, as healthy as possible. Your continued support and encouragement can make a big difference in helping your child protect themselves, their friends, family, coworkers, school community and broader community, and help slow the spread of COVID-19.

Visit the health unit's website for more information and regular updates about COVID-19 at [smdhu.org/COVID-19](https://www.smdhu.org/COVID-19) or call Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520.