

# COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE: RETURN TO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS, EMPLOYEES & VISITORS

This guidance reflects the [Ontario COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening](#). It can be used by school administrators with employees, visitors, students and/or their families to help determine screening recommendations and timelines for return to school.

**Is the student, employee or visitor fully vaccinated\* or aged 11 and/or younger?**

<b>1A. In the last 5 days, has the student, employee or visitor had <u>one or more</u> of the following symptoms?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fever and/or chills</li> <li>Cough or barking cough (croup)</li> <li>Shortness of breath</li> <li>Decrease or loss of taste or smell</li> </ul>	<b>1B. In the last 5 days, has the student, employee or visitor had <u>two or more</u> of the following symptoms?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sore throat or difficulty swallowing</li> <li>Runny or stuffy/congested nose</li> <li>Headache</li> <li>Extreme tiredness</li> <li>Muscle aches or joint pain</li> <li>Nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea</li> </ul>	<b>1C. In the last 5 days, has the student, employee or visitor tested positive for COVID-19? (Rapid Antigen or PCR)</b> <p><b>IF YES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They must stay home and <b>isolate for 5 days</b> and until symptoms have been improving for 24 hours (48 hours for nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea).</li> <li>The isolation starts from the date symptoms began OR the date they tested positive (whichever is first).</li> <li><b>Siblings and all household members must isolate for the same amount of time, regardless of vaccination status, unless they tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days and have completed their isolation.</b></li> <li>A negative test result is not required for return to school. They can return when their isolation period is complete.</li> </ul>
<p><b>IF YES to 1A or 1B:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They <b>must stay home and isolate for 5 days</b> from when symptoms started and stay in isolation until symptoms have been improving for 24 hours (48 hours after nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea), whichever is longest.</li> <li><b>Siblings and all household members must stay home for the same amount of time regardless of vaccination status, unless they tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days and have completed their isolation.</b></li> </ul>		
<p><b>NOTE:</b> If a student, employee or visitor who had <b>only one symptom listed in question 1B or any other symptom not listed on the COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening Tool</b>, they can return to school when symptoms have been improving for 24 hours (48 hours for nausea, vomiting, diarrhea). Siblings and other household members are not required to stay home.</p>		
<p><b>If NO to both questions 1A &amp; 1B, proceed to next page.</b></p>		

**Is the student, employee or visitor aged 12 or older and not fully vaccinated\* OR immunocompromised\*\*?**

<b>2A. In the last 10 days, has the student, employee or visitor had <u>one or more</u> of the following symptoms?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fever and/or chills</li> <li>Cough or barking cough (croup)</li> <li>Shortness of breath</li> <li>Decrease or loss of taste or smell</li> </ul>	<b>2B. In the last 10 days, has the student, employee or visitor had <u>two or more</u> of the following symptoms?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sore throat or difficulty swallowing</li> <li>Runny or stuffy/congested nose</li> <li>Headache</li> <li>Extreme tiredness</li> <li>Muscle aches or joint pain</li> <li>Nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea</li> </ul>	<b>2C. In the last 10 days, has the student, employee or visitor tested positive for COVID-19? (Rapid Antigen or PCR)</b> <p><b>IF YES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They must stay home and <b>isolate for 10 days</b> and until symptoms have been improving for 24 hours (48 hours for nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea).</li> <li>The isolation starts from the date symptoms began OR the date they tested positive (whichever is first).</li> <li><b>Siblings and all household members must isolate for the same amount of time, regardless of vaccination status, unless they tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days and have completed their isolation.</b></li> <li>A negative test result is not required for return to school. They can return once their isolation period is complete.</li> </ul>
<p><b>IF YES to 2A or 2B:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They <b>must stay home and self-isolate for 10 days</b> from when symptoms started and stay in isolation until their symptoms have been improving for 24 hours (or 48 hours after nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea symptoms), whichever is longest.</li> <li><b>Siblings and all household members must self-isolate for the same amount of time regardless of vaccination status, unless they tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days and have completed their isolation.</b></li> </ul>		
<p><b>NOTE:</b> If a student, employee or visitor who had <b>only one symptom listed in question 2B or any other symptom not listed on the COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening Tool</b>, they can return to school when symptoms have been improving for 24 hours (48 hours for nausea, vomiting, diarrhea). Siblings and other household members are not required to stay home.</p>		
<p><b>If NO to both questions 2A &amp; 2B, proceed to next page.</b></p>		

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Questions 3-5 apply to all students, employees or visitors, regardless of their age or vaccination status.

3. Does the student, employee or visitor live with someone who is isolating because of COVID-19 symptoms, a positive COVID-19 test, or is waiting on COVID-19 test results?

**IF YES:**

- The student, employee or visitor can return to school when their household member is cleared from their isolation.
- Siblings and all household members, regardless of vaccination status, must stay home until their household member is cleared from isolation.
- If additional household members develop symptoms, the initial household member(s) who have already had symptoms and/or positive test results do not have to extend their isolation period.

Note: If a student, employee or visitor have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days their response to this question is NO.

4. Has the student, employee or visitor been identified as a close contact of someone who tested positive or has symptoms of COVID-19?

**IF YES:**

- For close contacts outside of school, the student, employee or visitor can return to school when they have completed their [isolation](#).
- Siblings and household members can go to school, child care or work, but must not leave the home for other non-essential reasons.

Note: The student, employee or visitor may answer NO to this question if any of the following apply:

- They are fully vaccinated and not immunocompromised (and do not live with the person who has COVID-19).
- They have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days.
- The close contact occurred at school.

5A. In the last 14 days, has the student, employee or visitor travelled outside of Canada and been told to quarantine?

**IF YES:**

- If they **were told to quarantine**, they must stay home and self-isolate for 14 days after their return to Canada following [federal guidelines](#).

5B. In the last 14 days, has the student travelled outside of Canada and been told not to attend school?

**IF YES:**

- The student **must** follow [federal guidelines](#) for individuals who have travelled internationally, including not going to school for 14 days after their arrival and getting tested as per federal requirements.

5C. In the last 14 days, has someone the student, employee or visitor live with travelled outside of Canada and is isolating while waiting for COVID-19 test results?

**IF YES:**

- They must stay home until the household member gets a negative PCR test result.

IF NO TO ALL QUESTIONS, THEN THE STUDENT, EMPLOYEE OR VISITOR IS LIKELY CLEARED TO RETURN TO SCHOOL; HOWEVER, THEY MUST COMPLETE AND PASS THE [COVID-19 SCHOOL AND CHILD CARE SCREENING](#).

### Additional Information:

**\*In Ontario, an individual is considered FULLY VACCINATED if they have received:**

- A full series of a COVID-19 vaccine authorized by Health Canada, or any combination of such vaccines,
- One or two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health Canada, followed by one dose of a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine authorized by Health Canada,  
or
- Three doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health Canada;
- and they received their final dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at least 14 days ago.

**\*\*Individuals who are immune compromised (regardless of age or vaccination status) should refer to the guidance in questions 2-5.**

#### **Determining an isolation period:**

- The day symptoms began, or the date of a positive test is considered day 0. For example, individuals isolating for 5 days: if symptoms develop on Saturday (day 0), the return to school date is on Friday (day 6).
- All household members must isolate for the same amount of time as the symptomatic or positive individual, regardless of vaccination status. If another household member becomes symptomatic or tests positive, the remaining household members must extend their isolation period, except for the initial household member(s) with symptoms and/or positive test results.

#### **Return to school after having symptoms:**

- If a **single PCR test or Rapid Antigen Test is positive**, the student, employee or visitor should follow the guidance above in questions 1 or 2.
  - A negative test result is not needed for return to school if the student, employee or visitor has completed their required isolation period and symptoms have been improving for at least 24 hours (48 hours for nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea).
- If a **single PCR test is negative** students, employees or visitors can return to school when their symptoms have been improving for at least 24 hours (48 hours for nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea).
- **One negative Rapid Antigen Test does not rule out COVID-19.** If a second rapid antigen test is repeated 24-48 hours later and both tests are negative, then students, employees or visitors can return to school when their symptoms have been improving for at least 24 hours (48 hours for nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea).

#### **Previous COVID-19 infection:**

- Household members and/or close contacts who have previously tested positive for COVID-19 **in the last 90 days** (based on positive test results from a PCR or RAT), are not required to self-isolate as long as they are currently asymptomatic. These individuals are advised to self-monitor for symptoms for 10 days from last exposure and can attend work or school.
- If individuals who were previously positive for COVID-19 develop new or worsening COVID-19 symptoms, they must self-isolate again.

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