

SMDHU: COVID-19 SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDANCE DOCUMENT FOR SCHOOL / CHILD CARE SETTINGS

Last revised: February 23, 2021

This document provides supplemental guidance to reduce the risk of introducing and spreading COVID-19 in public and private schools and child cares in Simcoe and Muskoka. It should be used in conjunction with complete guidance provided in the [Ministry of Education's Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools \(Revised January 20, 2021\)](#) and the [Ministry of Health's COVID 19 Guidance: School Outbreak Management \(revised November 18, 2020\)](#) and [the Ministry of Education's Operational Guidance: COVID 19 Management in Schools \(revised February 9, 2021\)](#). Please visit the [SMDHU website](#) regularly for updates and additional guidance. Questions regarding Ministry of Education documents should be referred directly to the Ministry for clarification/direction.

SCREENING

All individuals including students, staff and essential visitors must self-screen each day before entering the school and/or child care setting using the Government of Ontario's: [COVID-19 school and child care screening tool](#).

Specific guidance for students, staff and/or visitors experiencing symptoms:

- **Anyone with *new or worsening* symptoms listed in the COVID-19 Screening Tool (not related to a pre-existing known cause or condition), must stay home from school and/or child care and should follow the advice listed in the screening tool.** They are also responsible to inform the school and/or child care of their absence due to illness, as per established processes.
- **Where the advice is to be tested for COVID-19 and/or seek medical advice, if required:**
 - Testing is encouraged locally as it is difficult for health care providers to distinguish between COVID-19 and other viral illnesses for which we do not have tests.
 - If the student, parent/guardian, staff/visitor feels there is another explanation for the new symptom(s) requiring medical assessment rather than a COVID-19 test, they should contact their health care provider as usual. Some COVID-19 assessment centres will also do a medical assessment in addition to COVID-19 testing. If the health care provider makes an alternative diagnosis and determines that the condition is not COVID-19, the individual can return to school or child care once it has been at least 24 hours since symptoms started improving.
- If result is negative, students, staff and visitors are able to return if all of the following apply:
 - They do not have a fever (without using medication), **AND**
 - It has been at least 24 hours since their symptoms started improving, **AND**
 - They were not in close physical contact with someone who currently has COVID-19.
- Individuals with symptoms compatible with COVID-19 who do not undergo testing OR receive an alternative diagnosis, must self-isolate for a minimum of 10 days from symptom onset (even if symptoms resolve). After self-isolating for 10 days, they may return to school and/or child care if they have been at least 24 hours without a fever and symptoms are improving. It is difficult for a health care provider to rule out COVID-19 without a test, if there is not a clear alternative diagnosis.
- Medical documentation or proof of a negative test result is not required to return to school or child care; **however, schools and/or child care centres may request the student/staff/visitor complete an attestation form, for safe return. A sample [attestation form](#) is available on SMDHU's website.**

SMDHU: COVID-19 SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDANCE DOCUMENT FOR SCHOOL / CHILD CARE SETTINGS

Any household members of the ill individual are to isolate until the symptomatic individual receives a negative COVID-19 test or an alternate diagnosis from a healthcare professional. If the person with symptoms in the household does NOT get tested, everyone else in the household MUST stay home for:

- 14 days from the last contact with the ill person if the ill person can self-isolate away from the rest of the household; or
 - 24 days from start of the ill person's symptom(s) if the ill person CANNOT self-isolate away from the rest of the household.
- If someone answers yes to any of the other screening questions, they should follow the direction provided in the screening tool.

Travel considerations:

- If your child or someone in their household **travelled outside of Canada** in the past 14 days, the traveller and/or children in the household must isolate (stay home) until 14 days from the traveller's return date to Canada.

ISOLATION AND MANAGEMENT OF ILL INDIVIDUALS AT SCHOOL

Follow guidance per Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education documents linked in the introduction. The following is in addition to that guidance:

- Follow SMDHU's [When COVID-19 Symptoms Develop at School or Child Care](#) protocol for when a child/student, staff or visitor develops symptoms of COVID-19.
- Staff attending to a symptomatic student should wear appropriate PPE including at a minimum a medical mask and eye protection. Where possible, anyone who is providing care to the student should maintain a distance of 2 metres.
- If appropriate PPE is not worn, staff providing direct care for the ill student may need to isolate for 14 days if the child tests positive.

SMDHU: COVID-19 SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDANCE DOCUMENT FOR SCHOOL / CHILD CARE SETTINGS

CASE & OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT

- Please refer to SMDHU's [School Protocol: When a COVID-19 Outbreak is Declared](#).
- Where there is sufficient concern that an individual may have COVID-19 (e.g. school is informed by a parent/guardian that a student has been diagnosed with COVID-19, or informed by a staff that they have been diagnosed with COVID-19), or there are concerns about multiple ill individuals in a cohort, the school should report this to SMDHU immediately. Note: SMDHU also receives lab reports directly on all positive COVID-19 cases.
- SMDHU will manage individual cases and outbreaks of COVID-19 in school settings including providing direction on communications with staff, visitors, students and families.
- Management of an individual case or an outbreak in a school will be based on an individual risk assessment by SMDHU at the time, and informed by the [Ministry of Health's COVID 19 Guidance: School Outbreak Management](#). Control measures could include:
 - Identification and exclusion (if applicable) of contacts
 - Dismissal of case's cohort (e.g. classroom, school bus, before/after program) or multiple cohorts as needed for various lengths of time
 - Recommendations for increasing environmental cleaning and further limiting of activities
 - Recommendations for testing of contacts (staff and students), including those with no symptoms
 - Enhanced surveillance recommendations
- An outbreak in a school is defined as two or more lab-confirmed COVID-19 cases in students and/or staff (or other visitors) with an epidemiological link, within a 14-day period, where at least one case could have reasonably acquired their infection* in the school (including transportation and before/after school care).

*Examples of reasonably having acquired infection in school include:

- No obvious source of infection outside of the school setting; OR
- Known exposure in the school setting

Personal Protective Equipment for staff/visitors

The Ministry of Education has directed that all staff in a school are required to wear medical masks while inside the school, including in hallways. **SMDHU also recommends the wearing of eye protection (e.g. face shield) at all times, in addition to medical masks;** it provides additional protection for staff as it can be difficult to anticipate being within 2 metres of others, and it lessens the likelihood of a staff member needing to be off work in the event of exposure to a COVID-19 case. Reasonable exceptions to the requirement to wear masks will be put in place by administrators.

Please contact the Health Connection if you have any questions at 1-877-721-7520
Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Saturdays, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or email schoolhealth@smdhu.org