

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

Last revised: September 8, 2021

This document provides supplemental guidance to reduce the risk of introducing and spreading COVID-19 in public and private schools and child care settings in Simcoe and Muskoka. It should be used in conjunction with complete guidance provided in the Ministry of Education: [COVID-19: Health, safety and operational guidance for schools \(2021-2022\)](#) and Ministry of Health [COVID-19 Guidance: School Case, Contact, and Outbreak Management \(August 11, 2021\)](#).

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](#). If a student, employee, or essential visitor does not pass the daily screening, they must follow the directions listed in the screening tool.

Further to the directions listed in the Ontario COVID-19 school and child care screening tool:

- **Where it is recommended to talk with a health care provider to get advice or an assessment, including if you need a COVID-19 test: the SMDHU encourages that individuals seek testing, 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. Individuals who have had symptoms of COVID-19 and who do not get tested, can return to school or child care if all three of the following apply:
 - a doctor provided an alternative diagnosis, AND
 - they do not have a fever (without using medication), AND
 - it has been at least 24 hours since symptoms started improving (or 48 hours if they had nausea/vomiting/diarrhea).
- 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 (or 48 hours if they had nausea/vomiting/diarrhea).
- Medical documentation or proof of a negative test result is not required to return to school or child care.
- Any household members of the ill individual who are not fully immunized or previously positive in the last 90 days are to isolate until the symptomatic individual receives a negative COVID-19 test or an alternate diagnosis. If the person with symptoms in the household does NOT get tested, everyone else who is not fully immunized in the household MUST stay home for:
 - 10 days from the last contact with the ill person if the ill person can self-isolate away from the rest of the household; or
 - 20 days from start of the ill person's symptom(s) if the ill person CANNOT self-isolate away from the rest of the household.

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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 Guidance: When Symptoms Develop at School or Child Care](#) 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 10 days if the child tests positive.

CASE & OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT

- Please refer to [SMDHU School Guidance: 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), school principals are legally required to report to the local health unit. Contact your school board's assigned COVID Lead or designate and confirm next steps for notifying the SMDHU. 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: [COVID-19 Guidance: School Case, Contact, and Outbreak Management \(August 11, 2021\)](#).

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

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. **The SMDHU recommends school staff wear eye protection (e.g. face shield), in addition to medical masks while working in close contact with students.** Reasonable exceptions to the requirement to wear masks will be put in place by administrators.

As Per Ministry guidance: Students in Grades 1 to 12 must wear masks in schools, including in hallways and during classes and on school transportation. **The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) is recommending that school boards and private schools mandate students in kindergarten (JK and SK) to wear masks while attending school in-person during the 2021-2022 school year.**

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