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COVID-19 in Child Care

Alternate diagnosis will only be accepted after a negative COVID-19 test

Attention: Physicians, Emergency Departments, Infection Control Practitioners, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Nurse and Nurse Practitioners, Midwives, Family Health Teams, Pharmacies, Central LHIN, NSM LHIN, Beausoleil First Nation, Moose Deer Point First Nation, Rama First Nation, Wahta First Nation, Group Homes, Homes for Special Care

Date: December 10, 2021

In the 3-week period from November 14, 2021 to December 4, 2021, 1,499 cases of COVID-19 were reported in Simcoe Muskoka, with 25% (n=375) being in those under 12 years. While the majority of cases under 12 years of age are school-aged children (5-11 years), 17% of these cases have been in children 0-4 years. The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) has observed increasing weekly COVID-19 incidences since the week of October 24, 2021. Most notably, between October 2021 and November 2021, the age-specific incidence rate for those aged 0-11 years has increased three-fold.

With the climbing cases of COVID-19 in the region, particularly in the unvaccinated population, we are adjusting recommendations for children in licensed child care facilities. **Symptomatic children excluded from facilities will not be allowed back until the following is completed:**

- Negative COVID-19 PCR test, and symptoms have improved, OR
- 10 days have passed since symptom onset (and symptoms have improved) if no test was completed; OR
- **An alternate diagnosis will now only be accepted after a negative COVID-19 test is received.**

We continue to see individuals with co-infections with other viruses which is why it is important to complete the COVID-19 test prior to providing an alternate diagnosis. If the COVID-19 test is negative, and your index of suspicion for COVID-19 is still high, consider retesting if symptoms are not improving or are getting worse.

Some child care centres have implemented stricter policies that expand the number or types of symptoms beyond the [COVID-19 screening tool](#) for school and child care to include all respiratory or gastroenteritis symptoms. SMDHU fully supports this approach. **The only way to rule out COVID-19 at this time is through testing.**

