

Dear parent/guardian/member of our school community:

Re: Updated symptom screening tool and isolation requirements

As the Medical Officer of Health and Directors of Education, we remain committed to keeping our schools COVID-safe. As we continue to navigate this school year together, we are working to make sure all families have the most up-to-date information about safe schools and evolving requirements.

You may have heard of the new variants of the COVID-19 virus called variants of concern (VOC). It is common for viruses to change over time and this is the case with the COVID-19 virus.

As we have seen in other parts of the world and within our own province, these new variants spread more easily compared to the original virus. This means that we will expect to see more cases of COVID-19. The good news is that the same public health measures that protect us from COVID-19, also protect us from the VOCs. Now is the time to ramp up our efforts to slow the spread of the COVID-19 VOCs for as long as we can.

In response to the evolving situation of the COVID-19 VOCs, the Government of Ontario is adopting a more rigorous and cautious approach to implementing public health measures. Local public health units and school boards are supporting the enhanced school and child care provincial screening tool as well as putting into action the updated isolation requirements for household members.

As always, staff and students should use the COVID-19 Screening Tool for Children in School and Child Care on a daily basis. The tool can be found at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/school-screening/>. Effective February 19, 2021, students and children with any new or worsening symptoms of COVID-19, even those with only one symptom, are required to stay home.

When a child has symptoms

A child with symptoms will be required to isolate at home until:

- They receive a negative COVID-19 test result OR
- They receive an alternative diagnosis by a health care professional OR
- It has been 10 days since their symptom onset and they are feeling better.

In addition to the sick child staying home, everyone else in the household, such as siblings and parents/guardians is required to stay home from school and work for the same time period. If the ill child is not tested for COVID-19, all household contacts must isolate for 14 days from their last contact with the child.

If the child is tested for COVID-19, the child must remain in isolation at home and cannot attend school in-person while waiting for the appointment/test results. All household contacts, even if asymptomatic, are also required to stay home. The sick child must self-isolate away from other household members. Note that if the sick child is too young and cannot isolate apart from other household members, one parent/caregiver must also isolate with the child away from other household members.

If testing is recommended by a health care provider and/or the COVID-19 Screening Tool for Children in School and Child Care and you decide to NOT have your child tested, your child must stay home and self-isolate for 10 days from when their symptoms started. All household contacts must isolate for 14 days from their last contact with the child. The child may return to school/daycare after 10 full days since the symptoms started as long as they do not have a fever and their symptoms have been improving for at least 24 hours. If your child cannot isolate apart from your household contacts (e.g. they are too young) and needs help, one parent/caregiver must also isolate with child and away from other household members. Please note, asymptomatic household members cannot be tested in accordance with provincial testing guidance. The symptomatic child would have to be tested in order for all household members to be released from self-isolation.

When a child tests positive

If your child tests positive for COVID-19, Algoma Public Health will receive the results directly from the lab and will contact you to provide further direction and guidance.

When a child tests negative, when testing is not needed, or another diagnosis is provided

If your child tests negative for COVID-19, if testing is not recommended, and/or an alternative diagnosis is provided, household members can end their isolation and your child may return to school/daycare if they are meeting the following criteria:

- They do not have a fever (without using medication); AND
- Their symptoms have been improving for at least 24 hours; AND
- They were not in close contact with someone who currently has COVID-19.

When a child is dismissed from school

If a child is dismissed from school because they are identified as a high-risk close contact of a case, all household members are required to stay home except for essential reasons such as attending work, school, or going for groceries. Household contacts are at an increased risk of exposure so must stay home unless essential for the duration of the child's isolation period. Additional guidance will be provided in letters from your school board and from public health.

While we understand that these changes may cause challenges and disruptions to families,

we must continue to do our part to prevent transmission in the community and in our schools. In-person learning is an essential priority for our children, one we have been fortunate to be able to protect throughout our district – one that we must continue to protect. Through our choices and actions, we can make it much more difficult for COVID-19 to spread.

If you have any questions, please visit our Schools and COVID webpage or contact Algoma Public Health's COVID-19 Phone Line: 705-759-5404 or 1-866-892-0172 ext. 5404.

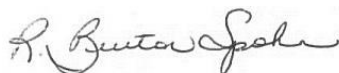
Thank you,



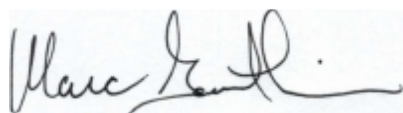
Dr. Jennifer Loo
Acting Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer, Algoma Public Health

Lucia Reece

Lucia Reece
Director of Education, Algoma District School Board



Rose Burton Sophn
Director of Education, Huron Superior Catholic District School Board



Marc Gauthier
Director of Education, Conseil scolaire public du Grand Nord de l'Ontario



Paul Henry
Director of Education, Conseil scolaire catholique Nouvelon