

## MASKS

**Should my child wear a mask?** Masks are required indoors for students in grade 4 and up. Students in grade 3 and lower should wear a mask if they are able. Masks reduce the chance of spreading the virus to other people. Students should wear a clean mask each day and change masks during the day if their mask gets dirty or damp. Students may need more than one mask per day, and schools will have extra masks if a child doesn't bring a spare.

### How can I encourage my child to wear a mask?

- Explain why - Use this as a teaching moment to explain why masks are important to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Use words they can understand and give them time to ask questions.
- Give choices - Have a couple of different masks for your children to choose from. Giving the option between wearing the blue mask or the pink mask helps make your children feel independent and in control, especially in a time where things may be changing frequently.
- Include masks with playtime - Let your kids play with clean cloth masks in a space where they feel comfortable. This can help them become more comfortable with masks.
- Lead by example - When you are going to an enclosed public space, show your kids how you wear your mask and why you are wearing it. Be a role model for your kids to help normalize the use of masks.

**What if my child can't wear a mask?** It is acceptable that some children cannot safely wear a mask or face covering because of medical conditions such as breathing difficulties, cognitive difficulties, hearing or communication difficulties; or if they are unable to apply or remove a mask without assistance. Your school board may have a procedure for mask exemptions.

**What kind of mask is okay to wear to school?** Students can wear any mask or face covering that is properly fitted and securely covers their mouth, nose and chin. Reasonable alternatives to a mask are a bandana or scarf.

**How should masks be stored when not in use (during lunch or outside time)?** Cloth masks can be re-used throughout the day if not damp, soiled or damaged. With clean hands, remove the mask from your face and fold it in half so that the outer surface is inwards (so that the contaminated outer surface is not contacting anything during storage) and place it in a clean, sealable bag until ready to use it again the same day. Clean your hands after taking off the mask. Note that cloth masks are considered contaminated after a day's use, even if not damp or dirty, and need to be washed before re-use. A disposable mask can be re-used, so long as it is not damp, damaged or dirty and has been stored between uses as described above. At the end of a full day's wear or if the disposable mask has



become damp, dirty or damaged, it is best to throw out the mask. After breaks such as mealtimes, you can reuse a disposable mask if it is still appearing clean, dry, and undamaged and you have stored it appropriately between uses. You can temporarily store disposable masks by using the same method as cloth masks.

More Q&A on masks can be found here: <https://www.nwhu.on.ca/covid19/Pages/masks-faq-public.aspx>

## SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS

**When should my child be kept home from school?** Each morning you should do a COVID-19 assessment before sending your child to school. Your child should be kept home from school if showing any signs of illness. The assessment can be found at: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>. It asks about symptoms of fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, trouble swallowing, stuffy nose, runny nose, loss of taste or smell, not feeling well, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, pink eye, chills, headache, extreme tiredness, falling down often, sluggish, and lack of appetite.

**What temperature is considered a fever?** Temperatures of 37.8 degrees Celsius/100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.

**What should I do if my child is sick and I am keeping them home?** Notify the school, as you usually would, including information about symptoms of illness. The school has an instruction sheet for parents, provided by the Northwestern Health Unit (<https://www.nwhu.on.ca/covid19/Documents/Child%20with%20Symptoms.pdf>) that you should follow.

**Do siblings with no symptoms need to stay home if one child is sick?** While risk of COVID-19 is low and there is no evidence of community spread of COVID-19 in our area, this is not required. Siblings who have no symptoms of illness can continue to attend school, unless they have been directed by public health to self-isolate because of contact or probable contact with COVID-19.

**What happens if my child gets a symptom of illness at school?** Your school will have a specific procedure to ensure your child is brought to a room where they can maintain their distance from others, and be monitored by staff. You will be notified and required to pick up your child as quickly as possible. The school will provide an instruction sheet for parents, provided by the Northwestern Health Unit (<https://www.nwhu.on.ca/covid19/Documents/Child%20with%20Symptoms.pdf>) that you should follow.

**What if my child has a chronic condition like allergies and always or regularly has symptoms like COVID-19?** You should talk with your child's school and your health care provider to ensure awareness of chronic conditions that might appear to be COVID-19 symptoms. Your school might have a form for you to fill out. You should monitor your child daily for any unusual, unexpected or changes in their condition that could be symptoms of COVID-19; these would be reasons to keep them home and consider testing for COVID-19 or visiting your health care provider for assessment.



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### **What if I think its just a common cold?**

If a student has symptoms of a cold or the flu, then COVID-19 testing is recommended. A doctor or nurse practitioner won't be able to determine whether a student has COVID-19 without a test.

## TESTING

**Where can I get tested?** Information about testing can be found here: <https://www.nwhu.on.ca/covid19/Pages/self-assessment.aspx>.

## POSITIVE TESTS

### **What if my child tests positive for COVID-19?**

- Any individual who tests positive for COVID-19 should not attend school until they receive direction by their local public health unit or health care provider.
- Any individuals who test positive must remain in isolation for 14 days. Retesting is not recommended and doesn't change the 14 day isolation requirement.
- The Northwestern Health Unit will contact you for follow-up.
- The Northwestern Health Unit will notify the school that there is a positive case in the school.

**What if a parent or household contact tests positive?** If a parent receives a positive test for COVID-19, he or she is not obligated to inform the school of their test result, however, it is strongly recommended. Children in a household where a parent or other member has tested positive should stay home and isolate for 14 days. The Northwestern Health Unit will provide direction to close contacts, including household members of a person diagnosed with COVID-19.

## WHAT IF THERE IS A POSITIVE CASE IN THE SCHOOL?

**What will my child have to do?** Northwestern Health Unit will immediately get in touch with the case and start contact tracing. If your child is identified as a close contact, you will be contacted directly and given advice. Classroom cohorts will generally be considered at high risk. All students and staff determined to be at high risk will be directed to isolate and be tested (voluntary). If public health advises that a class, cohort or a school should be closed for a period of time, parents, students and staff will be notified immediately.

### **Will you tell the public if there is a case in the school?**

The Northwestern Health Unit will not release this information to the public, however, the Government of Ontario is asking that all school boards create a COVID-19 advisory section on their website. School boards and schools (if they have websites) will be asked to post information if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 that involves a student or a staff member in a school setting. In the



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interests of privacy, information provided to school communities will not identify the student or staff member that has received a positive COVID-19 test. Notice of any closures of classes, cohorts or schools will be posted on school websites and school board COVID-19 advisory sections.

**When would a school be shut down?** The Northwestern Health Unit will declare an outbreak and provide direction on outbreak control measures. This may include a partial or full school closure, based on the scope of the outbreak. It will depend on each scenario. Though an outbreak will be declared if two or more lab confirmed cases are linked to the school setting, and at least one could have been acquired in the school, there is no set number on when a school must be closed.

## RETURN TO SCHOOL

- If your child is waiting for a test result, suspected to have COVID-19 – do not return to school until a negative test result is received and at least 24 hours after symptoms of illness have resolved.
- If a household contact has a positive test result (even if no symptoms of illness) – do not return to school for 14 days.
- If your child has travelled out of the country – do not return to school for 14 days.
- If your child tested positive for COVID-19 - they will be told by the health unit when they can return to school.
- If your child is ill and you choose not to get them tested, they should isolate for 14 days unless all of the following apply:
  - a doctor diagnoses them with another illness
  - they do not have a fever (without using medication)
  - it has been at least 24 hours since their symptoms started improving (if they had symptoms)
- If your child has a known chronic condition like allergies or headaches, complete the online screening tool, and your child may attend school if they pass the screen.

## 500 NURSES INITIATIVE

**How many nurses will the NWHU be hiring for schools?** The Northwestern Health Unit received notification from the Ministry of Health that five additional public health nurses will be funded to support schools in the catchment area. Planning for recruitment is underway.



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