

March 2022

Dear Families and School Staff,

**RE: COVID-19 Updates in Schools and Catch-up Clinics for School Immunizations**

On March 9, 2022, the province announced [several changes](#) to health and safety measures in schools in response to ongoing improvements in key indicators (percent positivity, hospitalizations) in Ontario. This letter outlines continued measures families and staff should take to protect against COVID-19.

**1. COVID-19 Vaccination**

Peel Public Health continues to strongly recommend getting vaccinated and boosted (if eligible) to provide the most effective protection against hospitalization and severe illness associated with COVID-19. You can walk into any Peel Public Health clinic to get your COVID-19 vaccine or check the Region's [website](#) to book an appointment.

Our **school-based COVID-19 vaccine clinics** are also ready to welcome your children. Appointments for children five to 11 years old can be booked using the provincial [vaccine appointment booking](#) system or by calling the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900 (TTY 1-866-797-0007). Walk-ins are also permitted at all school-based clinics. A list of school-based COVID-19 vaccine [clinic locations and times](#) is available on our [website](#). Weekday evening clinic hours and all weekend clinics are open to the public.

We have partnered with ErinoakKids Centre for Treatment and Development to host COVID-19 vaccine clinics at their Brampton and Mississauga locations. These clinics provide a safe and comfortable child-focused space for some of our most vulnerable residents to receive their COVID-19 vaccine. The final clinic is scheduled for **Sunday, March 27** in Mississauga. More details, including booking information, is available [here](#).

**2. Masking**

As of March 21, 2022, masks will no longer be required to be worn by staff, providers, students, or visitors at school, child care, or on school transportation. In alignment with provincial direction, as of March 21, 2022, Peel Public Health will also rescind the recommendation to require kindergarten children to be masked.

In most circumstances, individuals will assess their own risk regarding when and where they choose to wear a mask. However, there are [ongoing recommendations](#) for masking that should be respected, including those who are recovering cases or

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contacts (details below). As we all adjust to the changing context of COVID-19, we must remain kind, considerate, and respectful towards everyone – regardless of whether they choose to wear a mask or not.

**Examples of when people should wear a mask in a school or child care setting:**

- **COVID-19 cases who have completed their isolation:**
  - **Cases eligible for a 5-day isolation period** should wear a mask in public settings for a total of 10 days after developing COVID-19 symptoms or being tested for COVID-19, whichever is earlier.
    - Reasonable exceptions for removing one’s mask include eating at work, school, or child care while maintaining as much physical distance as possible.
      - Individuals should avoid activities where mask removal may be necessary. This includes participating in sports or music activities where masks cannot be safely worn during this time.
    - Individuals who are exempt from masking (e.g., children under two years of age, etc.) may return to public settings without masking.
  - **Immunocompromised cases** should wear masks in public settings for a total of 20 days after developing COVID-19 symptoms or being tested for COVID-19, whichever is earlier.
- **Close contacts** who are [not required to self-isolate](#) should wear a mask in public settings for 10 days following their last exposure to a person with COVID-19. Similar exceptions to masking as stated above also apply for asymptomatic close contacts.
- **Returning international travellers** who are not required to self-isolate should wear a mask for 14 days in public spaces.
- **Individuals 2 years and older who develop COVID-19 symptoms at school or child care.**
- **Staff/provider caring for a symptomatic student/child** in school or child care setting (along with eye protection, gown, and gloves).
- **Individuals who choose to wear a mask.**

**3. Screening for COVID-19 symptoms and staying home when sick**

Please continue to screen at home daily for COVID-19 symptoms and exposures using the online school screener: [COVID-19 school screening \(ontario.ca\)](https://www.ontario.ca/exposed).

If you are exposed to a person with COVID-19, please visit this website: <https://www.ontario.ca/exposed>.

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If you have symptoms of COVID-19, follow the guidance in the attached chart from the Ministry of Health or visit: [COVID-19: Stop the spread | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/covid-19).

**4. Routine school immunization program: Hepatitis B, Human Papillomavirus, and Meningococcal vaccinations for students in grades 7-12**

Routine school immunizations (including the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), Hepatitis B (Hep B), or Meningococcal ACYW-135 vaccines), which were paused during the pandemic, resumed in Peel on March 7, 2022, for students in **Grades 7 to 12**.

Parents and guardians can check to see if their child has already received these vaccinations through [Immunize Connect Ontario \(ICON\)](#) or by asking their primary care provider.

Children 12 years or older do not need to wait between receiving the COVID-19 vaccine and receiving any of these vaccines. Co-administration is safe and effective.

More information is available on the Region's [website](#), including a link to [book an appointment](#) at a Peel Public Health clinic. Appointments can also be booked by calling (905) 799-7700.

If you have any questions, please call Peel Public Health at (905) 799-7700.

Thank you for your continued support.

Peel Public Health