

Date: December 8, 2023

RE: Steps to protect yourself from respiratory illnesses over the winter break

Dear families and staff,

Respiratory illness season is here, and the number of people in our community getting sick with the flu, common cold, and COVID-19 is rising. The level of infection that we're seeing is expected for this time of year, and we're anticipating an increase in the coming weeks. Peel Public Health offers the following recommendations to support a healthy winter break and return to school in January.

- **Keep sick kids at home before and after the break.** Children may return to school and childcare after they have no fever and symptoms have improved for 24 hours (or 48 hours for nausea, vomiting and diarrhea). If experiencing severe symptoms like chest pain or difficulty breathing, visit the nearest emergency department. If you have general questions, or are unsure where to access care, call Health Connect Ontario (formerly Telehealth) at 811, available 24/7 in multiple languages, speak to your family doctor, or access these resources available to everyone, including individuals without an Ontario health card:
 - **Regional Virtual Urgent Care Program:** regional-virtual-urgent-care.ca/
 - **Pediatric Care Clinic:** summervillefht.com/displayPage.php?page=Pediatric
 - **Chat online with a nurse, 24/7:** health811.ontario.ca/static/guest/home
- **Practice good hygiene.** Remind children to cover coughs and sneezes and wash hands often or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Screen with the self-assessment tool at** Ontario.ca/self-assessment and consider testing for COVID-19 as needed. Rapid antigen test kits are available now. Visit peelregion.ca/health/diseases/covid19/ for pickup locations.
- **Consider wearing a mask indoors**, especially in crowded spaces where you can't keep a safe and comfortable distance from others, and follow additional protective actions at these links:
 - **How to protect your family from respiratory illness, and where to seek care if sick:** peelregion.ca/health/diseases/respiratory-illness-season/
 - **Fever & Cough Resources for Parents:** thp.ca/emergency/A/fever.html#ermenutop

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- **Get vaccinated and stay up to date with vaccinations.** Everyone 6 months and older can get the flu or COVID-19 vaccine for free.
 - **Where to get the flu vaccine:** peelregion.ca/health/diseases/flu/
 - **Where to get the COVID-19 vaccine:** peelregion.ca/health/vaccinations/covid-19/

These actions can keep you and your loved ones from getting severely sick. Peel Public Health wishes you and your family a happy and healthy holiday season.

Sincerely,

Peel Public Health