

COVID-19 & REOPENING SCHOOLS

Frequently Asked Questions

Guidance given by Public Health reflects a general scenario and is based on current data and local numbers. This information is subject to change as new information or evidence about COVID-19 emerges locally and provincially. This document will be updated if any of the contained information needs to be revised, and an updated document will be shared with local school board partners.

If you have any further questions related to COVID-19 and school reopening, please contact **1-800-563-2808** or healthy.schools@healthunit.ca.

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Preparedness and Prevention

1. Is there a resource to help schools plan for and prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Public Health Ontario's [COVID-19 Preparedness and Prevention in Elementary and Secondary \(K-12\) Schools checklist](#) is a user-friendly resource to help school administrators, designated school staff and/or public health staff apply relevant provincial guidance to plan for, prevent, and detect COVID-19 in schools.

Personal Protective Equipment

2. What type of masks are recommended in the school setting, and when are they recommended? (updated October 2, 2020)

Medical masks (Level 1) and eye protection (face shields, goggles or safety glasses) will be provided for all teachers and other staff of school boards from the Ministry. Where necessary, such as in leading classes with students who are deaf or hard of hearing, masks with clear sections may be appropriate. All school-based staff will be required to wear medical masks, with reasonable exceptions for medical conditions. Although masks are required to be worn, they are not a substitute for physical distancing. If a child needs to see an educator's face and cannot see it from at least 2 meters away consider the use of a barrier (e.g., Plexiglass).

[Medical masks](#) (Level 1), eye protection (face shield, goggles or safety glasses), gowns and gloves are recommended for staff who are supervising a student who is symptomatic pending pick up from parent and/or guardian. The staff or student who is symptomatic also needs to be wearing a level 1 mask. Medical masks (Level 1) and eye protection (face shield, goggles or safety glasses) should also be worn when cleaning up a spill of blood or body fluid and there is a risk of splashes.

Students in grades 4 to 12 will be required to wear a non-medical or cloth mask indoors in school. This includes in hallways and during classes. Students from kindergarten to grade 3 will be encouraged to wear masks but it is not required for indoor spaces.

Masks should be changed when they are damp, dirty or damaged. Medical masks are not recommended to be reused and they are to be disposed of when crumpled, moist or visually contaminated.

More information about masks is available on the [NBPSDHU's Face Coverings](#) website.

3. What eye protection is recommended in the school setting, and when is it recommended?

Eye protection (face shield, goggles or safety glasses) needs to be available to be worn by staff educating students who are not wearing a mask (students in ELK to grade 3) and when a staff member feels like they are in a situation where splashes to the face could occur (toileting accidents, educating students with

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certain special needs). Eye protection also need to be available to be worn by a staff member when supervising a child that is symptomatic and is waiting to be picked up. Eyeglasses are not a suitable form of eye protection.

4. When are gloves recommended in the school setting?

Gloves should be worn by staff who are involved in personal care of a student or cleaning up spills of blood or body fluid. Wearing gloves is not a substitute to hand hygiene. Hand hygiene should be performed before putting on and after taking off gloves.

5. When are gowns recommended in the school setting?

Gowns need to be available to be worn by a staff member when supervising a student that is symptomatic and is waiting to be picked up. Level 1 gowns are acceptable. If a staff member feels like they are in a situation where their clothing is at risk of being contaminated by blood or body fluid, a gown is to be available to them to wear (e.g., toileting accidents, educating students with certain special needs).

6. Are shoe covers recommended in a school setting?

Shoe covers would only be needed by staff who are cleaning up a large spill of blood or body fluid, where their foot wear is likely to become contaminated by the spill.

7. Are schools considered a public space under the mandatory mask wearing directive?

Yes, schools are considered a public place where masks are now mandatory. Students in grades 4 to 12 will be required to wear a non-medical or cloth mask indoors in school. This includes in hallways and during classes. Students kindergarten to grade 3 will be encouraged to wear masks but it is not required for indoor spaces.

8. Are staff required to wear PPE while spending time outdoors (i.e., supervising recess, teaching outdoor physical education, outdoor extracurricular activities)? **(new October 2, 2020)**

If physical distancing can be maintained between staff and students while outdoors, no PPE would be required to be worn by staff. PPE should be carried with the staff member while outdoors in case the staff needs to break the physical distance between themselves and others. PPE that should be worn outdoors when physical distancing cannot be maintained is a medical mask (Level 1). Eye protection should also be worn by the staff member if they are unable to physically distance from others who are not wearing a face covering, when the staff member feels like they are in a situation where splashes to the face could occur and when the staff member is supervising a child who is symptomatic. Eye protection can be a face shield, goggles or safety glasses.

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Hand Hygiene

9. How often and when should hands be washed?

Hands need to be washed at least 5 times a day; however, staff and students will likely be washing their hands at least hourly if not more, based on their activities during the day. Moments where hands need to be washed include at the beginning of the day, before and after eating, before and after gym, after using the washroom, after coughing and sneezing into a sleeve, hands or using a tissue and after outdoor time.

A recommendation from SickKids is to have regularly scheduled hand washing breaks beyond the regular moments for hand washing. As this may increase traffic in the washrooms, it is recommended that handwashing should be done in the classroom, if possible, at available sinks or using alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR).

10. What temperature should the water be?

Warm water or cold water is fine, the water just needs to be comfortable for handwashing. Soaps and the friction of rubbing them together are important steps, as well as proper drying with a paper towel or hand dryer.

11. Should hand hygiene be done immediately upon entering the school, before leaving home or can it be done in the washroom at school?

To minimize traffic in the washroom, hand hygiene should be completed in other areas if possible, for example, classroom sinks, classroom 70-90% alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR), and/or school entry ABHR.

12. Is non-alcohol-based hand sanitizer acceptable to use in schools?

According to the CDC, non-alcohol-based hand sanitizers is not recommended as they do not work equally well on all types of germs and they do not kill germs, but reduce their levels on the skin. Hand sanitizer is recommended to be 70-90% alcohol. Consult the [Health Canada](https://www.healthcanada.gc.ca) website for an up-to-date list of approved hand sanitizers.

Classroom Items

13. Does each student need their own box of facial tissues? Can they have a general box per class?

It is not necessary for each student to have their own box; one box per class is acceptable. Hand hygiene needs to be done after using a tissue.

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14. What are the Health Unit's recommendations regarding the use of lockers and change rooms in elementary and secondary schools? (updated November 16, 2020)

Students in elementary schools can use their cubbies provided these cubbies are grouped together for children in the same class/cohort and that the children's personal items do not touch (as much as possible).

Lockers and change rooms can be used in secondary schools. It is recommended that the lockers of students from the same class/cohort be grouped together. Each cohort's locker group should be spread out from another cohort's locker group by at least 2m/6ft. Access to lockers should be scheduled so cohorts are not accessing lockers at the same time. Lockers do not need to be disinfected if it is the same student using it day after day.

Change rooms should only be used to store student personal items (ideally, items of students within the same class or cohort). If the change rooms are used for actual clothes changing purposes, you need to ensure that it is students from the same class/cohort using the room at the same time.

15. What items are students able bring to school and take home from school?

Items from home (e.g. toys) should be discouraged, except for the lunch bag, back pack, sun protection, water bottle and clothing. Other items like homework and school work/text books can move between home and school. These items should all be assigned to one student and not shared.

16. Are books allowed in the classroom to be shared by the students?

Items like books that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected should be batched. Batched items can be rotated and quarantined for 72 hours before use again.

17. Grade 9 Mathematics EQAO field testing is scheduled to begin December 14 in secondary schools. Each student will be required to individually access the assessment using a computer with a special "safe browser" (ensuring the students cannot open other applications while completing the exam). What are the recommendations for use of technology? (new November 16, 2020)

The protocols would be the same as what is in place for schools now. There should be individually assigned electronic equipment or equipment should be cleaned and disinfected between students. Electronic equipment is to be disinfected using approved disinfectants for this purpose. Students should be physically distant from each other if not in the same cohort, or if creating a new cohort, this should be documented. Hand hygiene before and after use of the computer is also advised.

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Physical Distancing/Cohorts

18. Does physical distancing need to be maintained within each cohort?

Physical distancing should be promoted as much as possible in each cohort at all times. Cohorts need to physically distance from each other. If staff are teaching more than one cohort, they need to maintain a physical distance from the cohorts. Staff need to physically distance from each other.

19. Can a teacher or practitioner interact with more than one cohort/class? If so, are there elements to consider? **(updated October 2, 2020)**

Yes, a teacher can work with more than one cohort if necessary. Physical distancing should be practiced as much as possible. In addition, PPE needs to be worn to protect the staff and the cohorts. A medical mask (Level 1) needs to be worn by all school-based staff with reasonable exceptions for medical conditions. In addition, eye protection (face shield, goggles or safety glasses) should be worn by staff educating students who are not wearing a mask (students in ELK to grade 3), when a staff member feels like they are in a situation where splashes to the face could occur (toileting accidents, educating students with certain special needs, cleaning up body fluids) and when a staff member is supervising a child that is symptomatic.

20. Are students allowed to sit at tables together in the classroom?

When children are in the classroom, efforts should be made to arrange the classroom furniture to leave as much space as possible between students. Physical distancing should be practiced within a cohort. If weather permits, consideration could be given to having classes outside.

21. Can different cohorts be allowed to use the same washroom?

Mixing of cohorts needs to be limited as much as possible. Educate students on the need to physical distance from those in different cohorts. Numbers should be limited in each washroom with a sign indicating the numbers of people permitted in the washroom at one time, based on the size of washroom and number of stalls. There is no need to wash hands before, but it is important that hands are washed afterwards. Increased cleaning and disinfection of the washroom is necessary. Washrooms need to be cleaned and disinfected at least twice a day.

22. What is the recommendation for secondary students who usually leave school during their free time or lunch?

Students would be permitted to leave, it would be important to emphasize physical distancing and encourage wearing a face covering when interacting with peers outside their household or cohort. Also, students should be reminded about mandatory face coverings when entering public buildings such as

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restaurants, convenience stores and grocery stores.

23. How do you proceed for high school courses where there is more than one cohort (e.g., workshops, music, arts, labs)?

It is not recommended that cohorts mix, however, cohorts can share a space if physical distancing is respected between the cohorts. SickKids recommends that curriculum options should not be altered because of the need to cohort.

24. Can teachers be scheduled to rotate to different schools or cohorts? (updated October 7, 2020)

Yes, staff can move from one school to another, with precautions in place. This would also be applicable for supply staff. Staff should maintain physical distancing and wear medical masks (Level 1) indoors, with reasonable exceptions for medical conditions. Eye protection should also be worn if necessary.

25. Will community agencies (e.g., One Kids Place) be allowed to come in to work with students in person? Or must it be virtual?

Yes, community agencies would be allowed to come into the school. They would need to practice physical distancing as much as possible and wear a medical mask while on site. If they must take their mask off for the session with a student, then virtual services would be a better option.

26. What are the protocols/recommendations around the movement of students within the school when needed (e.g., to recess, to access the gym)?

Movement within the school should be done in a way that permits physical distancing between cohorts. Stagger recess times and times when classes are accessing outdoors or other parts of the school. Have class changes in larger areas, instead of in the hall. Time should be scheduled to allow for disinfection of the gym and gym equipment between cohorts; this would cut down on cross traffic entering and exiting the gym. For example, if a class is waiting to go outside, have the class go outside while the first class is still there. The two classes should be under control and able to physically distance from each other in the larger space to allow for the first class to leave.

27. Certain groups of students may be pulled from their cohorts for part of the day to learn together in a more specialized way. Are students allowed to work with their specialized group as well as their homeroom cohort of peers, or would these students need to remain in their own cohort?

It would be recommended that they stay together as a cohort. If this is a detriment to their mental health or education, they can join their peers. The school/students should choose which cohort they want the students engaging in specialized learning to be in. If it is in their 'homeroom', they have to maintain physical distance in the specialized classes, and vice versa.

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28. In a potential “conventional school day routine” model, what are the considerations for physical distancing?

It is difficult to predict what the situation will be in the coming months, however if schools are permitted to begin operating in a “conventional” model it would mean that in our health unit jurisdiction the number of COVID-19 cases have been low for an extended period of time. Precautions like self-screening, isolating when sick, increased hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfecting would still need to be in place. Large gatherings like assemblies and field trips would not be recommended. Physical distancing would still be encouraged. It is unknown if cohorts will still be required if school is permitted operate regularly. This, like all guidance, is subject to change as the situation evolves.

29. Can a part-time staff member work at another workplace?

It is recommended for staff to work at one location, except when this would be unavoidable due to staff absences or create problems with staffing levels that would be detrimental to program delivery.

If staff are working at more than one workplace the following controls must be in place: the staff member's other position is not a health care worker (including student health care worker placements), screening and contact tracing logs are kept, and staff wear medical masks (Level 1) at all times and eye protection if necessary at both workplaces.

Cleaning and Disinfection

30. How often should we clean the students' desks?

Students’ desks/table tops are considered high touch surfaces, they should be cleaned twice daily and between each cohort, if applicable. Other high touch surfaces that should be cleaned at least twice a day and between cohorts, if applicable, include doorknobs, water fountain knobs, light switches, toilet and faucet handles, electronic devices, and students' chairs.

31. How often should floors be cleaned?

Floors should be cleaned between cohort changes at the school or on the typical schedule, whichever is more often. It is very unlikely for coronavirus to spread on the floor.

32. Are there any requirements for the use of Viper vs. Oxivir products?

Viper and Oxivir have the same active ingredient in them. They are both considered Accelerated Hydrogen Peroxide (AHP) products that have a DIN number and are approved for use. If a surface disinfectant has a DIN number it is acceptable to be used as it has been approved by Health Canada. There are many product names that are the same type of chemical. A list of disinfectants that have DIN

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numbers and are approved by Health Canada can be viewed on the [Health Canada](#) website. It is important to read the manufacturer's instructions for use to determine what surfaces it is compatible with and the contact time that needs to be followed. [PHO Factsheet Cleaning and Disinfecting for Public Settings](#).

33. What disinfectant is best used in classrooms, especially surfaces where food is going to be consumed?

There are food safe disinfectants that are typically used in inspected kitchens. Disinfectants that are not considered to be food safe, and used outside the inspected kitchen, can be wiped off with a clean damp cloth (with water) after the contact time for the disinfection is achieved.

34. Any protocols to clean up blood and body fluids (blood, vomit, saliva)? **(updated October 2, 2020)**

The staff should be wearing appropriate PPE when cleaning up body fluid spills. If it is a small spill, gloves would be recommended. If it was a spill where the staff could get sprayed, then a gown, gloves, medical mask (Level 1), eye protection (face shield, goggles or safety glasses) and possibly shoe covers would be recommended.

Immediately cover spillage with dry disposable paper towels.

Ensure surfaces contaminated by feces, vomit, blood or saliva are immediately cleaned with soap and water to remove organic material and then disinfected with a suitable disinfectant (e.g. Accelerated hydrogen peroxide ensure to follow manufacturer's guidelines for contact times).

35. Are fogging or misting machines acceptable for disinfecting classrooms?

The safety and effectiveness of fogging for disinfection for COVID-19 have not been demonstrated, based on previous assessments made in health care facilities. For fogging applications in these settings, potential worker exposure to disinfectants and subsequent adverse health effects, and lack of research supporting this practice in these settings, are concerns that may limit this method of disinfection. The World Health Organization (WHO) does not recommend fogging machines because it was found that spraying environmental surfaces in settings such as patient households and other health care and non-health care settings with disinfectants may not be effective in removing surface contamination and may miss surfaces shielded by objects, for example, folded fabrics, surfaces with intricate designs or surfaces with visible debris.

36. Is it ok for students to handle strong disinfectants if they need to disinfect?

The manufacturer's instructions for use for disinfectants need to be followed and understood. If a student can understand and follow the directions properly, household strength disinfectants can be used by them. If the student cannot understand and follow the directions, they should not be given access to disinfectants. Also, if the manufacturer's instructions include wearing PPE while using the disinfectant, that PPE needs to be provided to the student.

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Symptoms & Isolation

37. When should a student or staff be isolated and sent home? What about those with seasonal allergies or chronic conditions with symptoms that are on the self-assessment? **(updated October 7, 2020)**

Children often exhibit mild or atypical symptoms of COVID-19 or they may be asymptomatic. Staff and students should [screen for COVID-19](#) every day before going to school. It is important if a staff or student has one or more [symptoms](#) (that are new or worsening and that are not due to a pre-existing medical condition or seasonal allergies) that they immediately put on a medical grade mask, isolate and go home. The school should contact a parent/guardian for immediate pick-up. Older students may walk/drive themselves home. Students should not take school or public transportation.

Children and staff do not need to stay home from school and self-isolate if symptoms are due to a pre-existing medical condition or seasonal allergies and are not new or worsening.

Staff, students, or parents and guardians should be encouraged to complete the [COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening Tool](#) for information about when they can return to school.

If you have any questions, call the Health Unit's COVID-19 Call Centre at 1-800-563-2808 option 6.

38. Do household contacts of the person who is being isolated and sent home also need to be sent home and start self-isolation? **(new October 7, 2020)**

Based on the low number of COVID-19 cases and outbreaks across the district, the Health Unit advises that when a symptomatic individual is tested for COVID-19, their close contacts no longer need to self-isolate pending their results. These individuals are requested to **self-monitor**. Self-monitoring means that you can complete your daily activities and watch for symptoms of COVID-19. If you begin to show symptoms of COVID-19, self-isolate immediately and complete the [COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening Tool](#) for next steps and for information about when to return to school.

Note: The information above may differ from the direction provided in the Ministry of Health Self-Assessment Tool, as this is a local decision based on the current COVID-19 case and outbreak numbers in our Health Unit district.

39. What is the recommendation for isolation rooms/areas for students waiting to be picked up? **(updated October 2, 2020)**

A medical mask (Level 1), eye protection (face shield, goggles or safety glasses), gowns and gloves need to be worn by staff that is supervising students who are symptomatic pending pick up. Staff or students who are symptomatic also need to be wearing a medical mask. If there are students from different cohorts, all can be in the same area in masks, pending pickup. It is preferred if this area was a separate room, but

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understanding that in some schools this is difficult. Choose a space that is near the entrance or exit, can be disinfected easily, and is away from heavier traffic. Kits of PPE for the isolation room and staff that may require them should be created with a gown, gloves, eye protection and mask. Physical distancing must be encouraged in all isolation rooms/wellness spaces.

40. What process should schools follow to assist in contact tracing?

Records of students and educators that are in each cohort should be kept for contact tracing purposes. Ask staff to keep logs as well as any additional interactions that may be considered as close contacts. A tracking sheet needs to be kept for students sent home for COVID-19 related symptoms and sent to the Health Unit. There is a possibility of declaring an outbreak or an increased school absenteeism as a precursor to having a positive COVID-19 case, if there is an increase in students being sent home due to illness. If there is a confirmed case, the Health Unit would contact the school for contact tracing purposes. The data that would be required would include the names, contact information for the close contacts (students in the cohort, siblings of the positive case and any staff that are considered close contacts of that student/cohort).

41. When can students/staff return to school after experiencing symptoms? **(new October 7, 2020)**

If the [COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening Tool](#) advised a student or staff to seek advice from a health care provider, including if a COVID-19 test is needed:

- If they test negative for COVID-19 or receive an alternate diagnosis from a health care provider:
 - They can return to school if all of the following apply:
 - They have not had a fever for 24 hours (without using medication)
 - It has been at least 24 hours since their symptoms started improving
 - They meet all criteria for return to school in the [COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening Tool](#)
- If they test positive for COVID-19:
 - They can return to school only when they have been provided clearance from the health unit
- If they have not been tested:
 - They can return to school when:
 - They have completed 10 days of self-isolation AND
 - They have not had a fever for 24 hours (without the use of medication) AND
 - All other symptoms have been improving for 24 hours
 - They meet all criteria for return to school in the [COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening Tool](#)

If the [COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening Tool](#) advised a student or staff to stay home for 24 hours:

- If after 24 hours their symptom is improving:
 - They can return to school if they feel well enough to go. They do not need to be assessed by a health care provider or tested for COVID-19

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- If after 24 hours their symptom is persisting, worsening or they are developing new symptoms:
 - They should continue to stay home from school and seek advice from a health care provider, including if a COVID-19 test is needed. They must then follow the above return to school criteria for those who are tested, or who are isolating for 10 days.

42. What happens if a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19?

In the event of a confirmed positive case of COVID-19, the Health Unit will notify the relevant school board that a member of a specific school community has tested positive for COVID-19.

The Health Unit will conduct contact tracing and reach out to individuals who have been identified as close contacts to the individual who tested positive. This includes contact tracing for points of contact in the classroom, school, bus, before and after school programs, etc. The Health Unit will work closely with the school board to obtain key information about staff and students that is needed for contact tracing (e.g., attendance records, class lists, up to date contact information for parents/guardians, staff and students, etc.)

Please refer to this flow chart for further guidance: [School Protocol When Student/Staff Tests Positive for COVID-19](#)

43. What does it mean to have an outbreak declared at a school?

An outbreak in a school is defined as two or more lab-confirmed COVID-19 cases in students and/or staff in a school with an epidemiological link, within a 14-day period, where at least one case could have reasonably acquired their infection in the school (including transportation and before or after school care).

The Health Unit and local school boards plan to work together in case of an outbreak in schools. The Health Unit is responsible for determining if an outbreak exists, declaring an outbreak, providing direction on outbreak control measures to be implemented, and determining when the outbreak is declared over. The Health Unit will assist in determining which cohort(s) may be sent home or if a partial or full school closure is required based on the scope of the outbreak. Signage for school entrances will be available for schools to post in the event of an outbreak. Please note there may be variability in scenarios based on local context.

44. Will there be documentation that the Health Unit provides if a child or staff member tests positive for COVID, but feels ready to return to school/work? **(updated October 7, 2020)**

If a person in the school community (staff or student) tests positive for COVID-19, they will be isolated from school for a minimum of 10 days beginning from their symptom start date or test date, depending if they are symptomatic or asymptomatic. The Health Unit will follow protocols in the Ministry outbreak guidance documents.

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School Buses

45. How does the mask mandate affect school buses? School buses are seen as an extension of the school for other purposes.

Buses are a different scenario than school from an infection prevention and control (IPAC) perspective because there are multiple students from multiple cohorts potentially mixing with each other. If physical distancing is respected on school buses, the capacity of the bus is greatly reduced. To increase capacity on buses, school buses can consider themselves ‘public’ transportation and be covered under the mandatory mask wearing directive. Equitable access to non-medical masks in the school setting is an important consideration.

Young children should not be forced to wear a mask if mentally or behaviourally they are unable to. Masks are not recommended for use by unsupervised children unless advised to do so by a health care provider. In young children, in particular, masks can be irritating and may lead to increased touching of the face and eyes. Children under the age of two years, or children under the age of five years either by birth age or mental development who refuse to wear a face covering and cannot be persuaded to do so should be exempt from wearing masks.

46. What are the recommendations for physical distancing on the bus for student travel? Should students be seated in every second bench to maintain a 2 metre distance? This poses challenges by drastically reducing bus capacity. Or should students be seated one student per bench?

Support physical distancing between students on school vehicles by considering planning parameters of one student per seat (unless students are in the same household) and having students from the same classroom cohort sit in the same area, where possible. Children from the same household can be permitted to sit together and are not required to physically distance.

The back of the seat provides a physical barrier for young kids. Encourage mask wearing for where the barrier would not be large enough. Young children should not be forced to wear a mask if mentally or behaviourally they are unable to. Masks are not recommended for use by unsupervised children unless advised to do so by a health care provider. In young children, in particular, masks can be irritating and may lead to increased touching of the face and eyes. Children under the age of two years, or children under the age of five years either by birth age or mental development who refuse to wear a face covering and cannot be persuaded to do so should be exempt from wearing masks.

Another item to consider is having a supply of masks available if a child becomes ill during the bus ride. Provide the child with a mask and seat them at the front. Call the school so they can contact the parents to pick them up if it is on the ride to school.

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Eating at School

47. What are the Health Unit’s recommendations for offering grab and go style school nutrition programs? Specifically, what recommendations are there about cleaning and sanitizing bins/coolers and how often, physical distancing, guidance on how foods can be safely prepared/packaged in the inspected kitchen, recommendations on using coolers to keep food safe, whether students can grab their own items, and whether classroom bin programs are acceptable?

Food would be prepared in an inspected kitchen in the school, with staff/volunteers wearing face coverings.

Physical distancing of students needs to occur when accessing food. All food should be pre-packaged or served using serving utensils to students by a staff member/volunteer wearing a face covering and physically distancing from students. It would be ideal to have the Student Nutrition Program (SNP) delivered within classrooms if the food was able to be served safely to allow for easier physical distancing between students and less potential mixing of cohorts.

Alternately, it may be possible to offer some pre-packaged/portioned self-serve options safely if hand sanitizer is available and used immediately before. This should be monitored by a staff or volunteer for hand hygiene and physical distancing.

If coolers are to be used for keeping food cold in the classroom, ice packs are to be used for the food to keep it cold, if required. Potentially hazardous foods should not be kept on ice packs in a cooler for the whole school day. Having the cooler would allow for the food to be in the class for an extended time, until the staff member was able to return the bin to the congregate fridge.

The insides of bins/coolers need to be cleaned and sanitized as normal, after use. The outside of the bin should be sanitized twice daily or after each use.

Students should have access to handwashing or hand sanitizer before eating.

Whatever scenario is used for delivery of the SNP, keep in mind the main controls that are in place for COVID-19 (physical distancing, hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfecting) and the need to keep food safe.

48. What are the recommendations for pizza or hot lunch days? (new November 2, 2020)

This process for pizza days is acceptable:

- 1) Pizza gets delivered. Driver is met at the door by a staff member and does not enter the school.
- 2) Staff/volunteer wears a mask and washes their hands before separating pizza into classes (as needed) on a cleaned and sanitized work surface.

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- 3) Class rep (student/educator) picks up pizza box and delivers it to the class.
- 4) Educator/lunch monitor wears a mask and washes their hands before handing out pizza to students using tongs. Pizza can be placed on a dish (reusable or disposable) or paper towel/napkin.
- 5) Students wash or sanitize their hands before eating

The same applies for prepared lunches that are delivered to the school (e.g., subs).

Recess

49. What are the recommendations for safe recess practices?

Recess is a necessary break in the day for optimizing a child's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. It is important to keep recess as normal as possible to balance infection prevention with overall mental and physical health of students.

Some safe practices for recess include: allocating separate bins of equipment for each class, regular disinfection of shared recess equipment and playground structures, not allowing students to bring equipment from home, creating zones to help organize the play space and minimize crowding, encouraging physical distancing by minimizing contact activity, and providing handwashing stations. For more information on safe recess practices and game resources, see our [Recess Position Statement](#).

Curricular and Extra-Curricular Activities (new November 16, 2020)

50. What are the recommendations for activities involving singing (e.g., music class or choir)? (new November 16, 2020)

To date, there have been few studies investigating the link between singing and COVID-19 transmission, and none have been specific to children / youth. Overall, the available evidence suggests that the act of singing in indoor settings may contribute to the transmission of COVID-19 when one of the participants is infected. Given that singing and choir may elevate COVID-19 transmission risk, schools should complete a thorough risk assessment prior to resumption of these activities. If choosing to resume choir and singing activities, schools should incorporate additional risk mitigation measures such as:

- consider outdoor singing activities, weather permitting
- keep physical distance between each singer to at least 2 metres, and add more distance if possible
- organize the choir formation so singers are not facing each other directly or standing less than 2 meters behind each other
- consider opting for performances with fewer performers if distancing cannot be maintained
- Singers that are members of the same household would be at less risk and could sing together while being distanced from others.

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From: [COVID-19 guidance for schools Kindergarten to Grade 12](#)

Ventilation

51. What does the Health Unit know about current requirements for ventilation in school settings?

At the moment, current requirements for ventilation in schools according to Health Canada are to increase the ventilation and ensure ventilation is operational. Move activities outside (e.g., lunches, breaks, physical activity) as much as possible, weather permitting. Increase air exchangers by making adjustments to the HVAC system. Permit windows to be open in schools to allow for fresh air exchange. Increasing the ventilation may help to reduce transmission of COVID-19, but exact parameters are unknown at this time.

Pre-Planning for a Learn from Home Scenario **(new November 16, 2020)**

52. If schools shut down again, how can they safely use their buses and transportation system to deliver school-based materials (tech, at home learning items) to families? **(new November 16, 2020)**

The electronics can be cleaned and disinfected and ideally placed in to a bag to protect from contamination when being delivered. On the bus, the items in the bags can be stored in a tote or other container and the person delivering should pass screening, wear appropriate PPE and have alcohol-based hand sanitizer to perform hand hygiene. Appropriate PPE for school staff would be medical grade masks and if the person they were dropping off to did not have a mask, then they should also don eye protection. Disinfect the area of the bus used after use.

53. If schools shut down, what measures could be put in place for educators to remain on site to use internet, technology and materials to teach? **(new November 16, 2020)**

Screening before work each day should be completed. Keep a log of who was in the school for potential contact tracing. Educators ideally should be using individually assigned electronic equipment. If sharing equipment (for example, a photocopier), staff should wash their hands before use and the photocopier should be disinfected with an appropriate disinfectant twice daily. If educators are sharing a space, they must be spaced at least 6ft/2m from each other. No masks need to be worn when sitting. A face covering or non-medical mask should be worn when a staff member moves from their workstation. Limit the number of people in the staff room at one time. Ensure that physical distancing is respected if meetings are held. Frequently touched surfaces should be disinfected twice daily.

54. If schools shut down, what measures could be put in place to allow a minimal number of students access to the building for internet? **(new November 16, 2020)**

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The protocols would be the same as what is in place for schools now. There should be individually assigned electronic equipment or equipment should be cleaned and disinfected between students. Electronic equipment is to be disinfected using approved disinfectants for this purpose. Students should be physically distant from each other if not in the same cohort, or if creating a new cohort, this should be documented. Hand hygiene before and after use of the computer is also advised.

55. What protocols need to be in place for the pick-up of learning materials (e.g., electronics) at the school by students, parents or guardians in the event of a school closure to support at home learning? (new November 16, 2020)

It is recommended to have those picking up the learning materials do so by appointment in a block of time, if feasible, to avoid long lines and to encourage physical distancing. Those in self-isolation are not to be attending the school for pick-up of learning materials. Consider a method of delivery in these circumstances.

Masks need to be worn by staff who are present during the pick-up/drop-off times and it should be communicated to students and their families that masks are expected to be worn while picking up and dropping off learning materials. Consideration is to be given to those with mask wearing exemptions.

Electronic equipment is to be disinfected using approved disinfectants for this purpose before pick-up. Ideally after disinfection, the equipment is placed in a clean bag to protect them from contamination pending pick-up.

Staff who are handling electronic equipment should be performing hand hygiene when needed. When electronic equipment is returned to the school, it needs to be disinfected using approved disinfectants for this purpose before use by another staff/student.

Winter and the Holidays (new November 16)

56. Can my child wear "winter gear" in place of a face covering during cold weather? (new November 16, 2020)

Public health does not recommend 'neck gaiters', scarves, or balaclavas as an equivalent to, or substitute for a face covering. Most of these outerwear accessories are made up of single-layer, loose, coarsely woven, or knitted materials and, are less effective at filtering respiratory droplets compared to a cloth face covering with two or more layers. These clothing items also do not cover the nose and mouth areas well enough to be effective.

57. Are students allowed to bring their outdoor clothing (e.g., boots and snowsuits) home every day and back to school? (new November 16, 2020)

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Snowsuits and boots are able to be brought back and forth from school each day. These items are classified as essential daily items for students. Physical distancing should be maintained between students while they are taking off or putting on outdoor clothing.

58. How can winter gear be stored safely? (new November 16, 2020)

Physical distancing should be maintained between students while they are taking off or putting on outdoor clothing. Cohorts should not be mixed in areas where students are taking off or putting on outdoor clothing.

Schedule times when cohorts can access their lockers/cubbies/hooks where outdoor clothing is kept to avoid multiple cohorts accessing these spaces at the same time. It may be easier to have lockers/cubbies/hooks grouped by cohort and have each cohort's locker group spread out by at least 2m/6ft.

59. Can we host holiday concerts, assemblies or other holiday celebrations? (new November 16, 2020)

In person concerts, assemblies or celebrations should not be scheduled. Consider virtual options of these activities. If in person, holiday celebrations should only occur within each individual cohort and all other existing COVID-19 precautions followed.

60. Can treats be brought in from home and shared with students? (new November 16, 2020)

The health unit recommends that no treats be brought in from home to be shared with students.

61. Can staff accept gifts from parents or students? (new November 16, 2020)

If staff accept gifts from parents or students, items can be cleaned and disinfected or quarantined for 72 hours prior to use. Staff should complete hand hygiene after touching items.

62. Can holiday decorations, including a tree, be set up in the classroom? (new November 16, 2020)

Classrooms can be decorated to celebrate the holidays, including a holiday tree. Since many decorations are not able to be properly cleaned and disinfected, educators should encourage students to not frequently touch them. If planning an activity where students are involved in decorating, physical distancing and hand hygiene before and after the activity is encouraged.

63. What are the recommendations for schools for fundraising? (new November 16, 2020)

Door to door fundraising should be discouraged. Virtual fundraising options through friends and family may be considered.

If items are required to be picked up by students/guardians for selling, consider having pre-booked times

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that individuals can pick up items and setting a predetermined pick-up location. Have parents/guardians call when they arrive to the school to pick up items. Instead of directly handing items to parents/guardians, items can be placed outside in a location where an individual can pick up their items. If items later need to be dropped off at an individual's home, schedule a drop-off time with the person who has bought the item. Students/guardians should place items on a porch or outside the door instead of directly passing items to the individual. It is important that physical distancing is maintained, hand hygiene is completed, and face coverings are worn.

64. What are the recommendations for food drives and other donations? (new November 16, 2020)

The school should consider setting up a single donation point where individuals can drop off their items for donation (preferably a location where individuals would not need to enter the school). Consider having set hours when items can be dropped off. Each classroom could have a donation box where individuals from that classroom can place their donated items in. Individuals should be discouraged from touching any items that they did not donate, and from donating items when they are experiencing symptoms of illness.

If there are items donated that can be cleaned and disinfected (such as plastic containers), this could be done as a precaution. Clothing should be washed and dried on high heat settings prior to donating. Items donated should be "quarantined" for at least 72 hours prior to being given to the final donation location; therefore, consider having a cut off time for accepting donations that allows for the 72-hour quarantine period. When individuals are loading vehicles in preparation for delivering donated items to the final donation location, they should complete hand hygiene prior to and after this activity, wear a face covering and try to physically distance as much as possible.

65. What safety measures can be taken if the school decides to have a bake sale? (new November 16, 2020)

Although the Health Unit does not recommend that treats be brought in from home to be shared amongst students, children, staff, community members etc., there are some measures that can be taken to make this activity safer if the school wishes to host a bake sale:

- Individuals with symptoms of illness should not participate in any bake sale activities (including baking and selling items)
- The room where baked goods will be sold should be set up away from congregate areas
- Limit the number of people/tables in the room. Tables and individuals participating should be physically distanced
- Control traffic throughout sale area (i.e., directional markers on the floor to further encourage physical distancing)
- Limit the number of individuals permitted in the sale area
- All participants should wear a face covering/mask
- Hand sanitizer should be available and its use encouraged
- All items sold should be prepackaged and ready to sell (i.e., baking put in individual bags prior to

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them leaving the baker's home)

- There should only be one individual handling money. This person should not also handle food items

66. Can students attend day camps over the holiday season? (new November 16, 2020)

It is encouraged that students limit their contact with individuals outside of their household and cohorts as much as possible to minimize the risk of COVID-19.

If students are participating in these types of activities, day camps have specific guidelines (similar to those for schools and child care) that need to be followed:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_summer_day_camps_guidance.pdf

67. What precautions can be taken to safely run classrooms during snow days? (new November 16, 2020)

During a snow day when staff resources may be limited and classrooms are partially empty, schools should continue to attempt to limit the mixing or combination of cohorts as much as possible. Consideration can be given to combining a classroom with their larger cohort (i.e., limiting direct contacts of students to 50 for elementary schools or 100 for secondary schools). If the school must combine cohorts, consider the use of larger rooms/spaces that will ensure physical distancing. Consideration to have cohorts separated by a physical barrier while in a larger space can be made. Encourage all students to remain distant from each other throughout the day, continue to wear their face coverings consistently, complete hand hygiene well and often, and cover coughs and sneezes. If spaces are being shared between multiple cohorts, an increase in cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces is recommended.

Other

68. What is the Health Unit's advice for supporting staff/students who are medically fragile (with certain medical conditions)?

Some staff and students may be at a higher risk of adverse outcomes from COVID-19 (e.g., those with underlying medical conditions). These individuals may attend school as per usual, however they should work with their healthcare provider to make an informed decision.

Parents of children who have medical and/or behaviour complexities can choose to not send their children to school based on the risk to the child's health. In this case, they would learn remotely with virtual learning opportunities. Alternately, if the parents choose to send their child, they may also choose to have their child to wear a face covering or mask. This choice needs to be supported. Provide smaller

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class sizes, other environmental supports and classroom supports (e.g., teacher aides) who may need assistance with toileting, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

The school would also be supporting the medically fragile students by being diligent about communicating to the school community about screening students daily and staying home when they exhibit any symptoms that are related to COVID-19. Also, immediately isolating symptomatic children when they become sick at school further protects the students with underlying health conditions that may choose to attend school in person. All the other control measures in place also help to protect the students.

69. What are the recommendations for reopening public libraries housed within schools? (new November 16, 2020)

Consider measures such as regular cleaning, occupancy limits, hand washing protocols, physical distancing, plexiglass where distancing cannot be maintained, and the use of face coverings. Libraries should continue to quarantine returned materials for 72 hours. You could allow individuals to browse books and materials. Much like lightly browsing books is no different from browsing shelves at the grocery or bookstore, libraries do not need to put the books and materials into quarantine after light browsing. That said, consider more intense use as an opportunity to disinfect or quarantine heavily used items.

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