

Dr. Eileen de Villa
Medical Officer of Health

Public Health
277 Victoria Street
5th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M5B 1W2

Tel: 416-338-7600
publichealth@toronto.ca
www.toronto.ca/covid19

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To: Parent or Guardian

Re: COVID-19 Testing during the Winter Break

As you prepare for the upcoming winter break, we would like to provide some information about COVID-19 preventive measures to keep everyone as safe as possible.

COVID-19 testing is an important public health measure because knowing who is infected with COVID-19 also helps to protect your family from further spread of this virus.

What to do if one of your family members has COVID-19 symptoms or has been notified that they have been exposed to COVID-19?

Individuals should go for **PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) COVID-19 testing** if:

- They have one or more [COVID-19 symptoms](#), even if they are mild;
- They have been exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19, as informed by public health or through the COVID Alert app; or
- Public health has asked them to get tested

PCR testing identifies genetic material from the COVID-19 virus and is the **most accurate** kind of COVID-19 testing. PCR tests are lab-based reports and results are generally available between 24-72 hours.

During the winter break PCR tests will continue to be available at COVID-19 [assessment centres](#). For additional information on COVID-19 testing, including a [map of COVID-19 Testing locations](#), we encourage you to [visit our website](#).

Rapid antigen screening will be available to all students for winter break period

To support the safe return of students after the winter break, the Ministry of Education will be providing publically funded schools in Ontario with rapid antigen screening kits for all students. Before the winter break, every student will be given a rapid antigen screening kit that contains five tests. These test kits will support all students to complete voluntary screening at home prior to the return to the classroom in January.

- Test kits will be distributed at the school to be used on a voluntary basis

- Students should complete a test every 3-4 days over the winter break on every Monday and Thursday beginning December 23, until all five tests have been used
- See here for a [video](#) and [information sheet](#) on how to use the test kit
- Rapid Antigen Tests are to be used for screening purposes for individuals who **do not** have COVID-19 symptoms
- If you have symptoms or are a close contact of a positive case of COVID-19, [get tested with a PCR test](#), even if you have used the Rapid Antigen Test

If the Rapid Antigen Test result is positive:

- [Get tested with a PCR test](#) as soon as possible and self-isolate while waiting for the PCR test result
- A PCR test is required to confirm the result because sometimes a Rapid Antigen Test can give a false positive result
- If the PCR test is positive, continue to self-isolate. Follow advice from public health

It is important to stay home if sick, [wear a mask](#), keep a [physical distance](#), and [wash hands](#) often. COVID-19 **vaccination is strongly recommended for those who are [eligible](#) and who are not fully vaccinated**. Appointments can be booked by visiting the [Ontario COVID-19 Vaccination Portal](#) or by calling the Provincial Vaccine Booking Line at 1-833-943-3900. Please see Toronto Public Health's (TPH) website for more information on [How to get vaccinated](#)

If you have general questions about COVID-19, please call our Hotline at 416-338-7600, Monday to Sunday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Interpretation services are available. If you need immediate health care assistance, please call Telehealth Ontario 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-866-797-0000.

Thank you for all that you are doing to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

Sincerely,



Nicole Welch
Director
COVID-19 Child and Youth Response Team
Chief Nursing Officer