

February 22, 2021

IMPORTANT NOTICE - PLEASE TRANSLATE!

ĐÂY LÀ ĐIỀU QUAN TRỌNG, XIN NHỚ NGƯỜI THÔNG DỊCH ĐỪNG

AVISO IMPORTANTE! POR FAVOR PIDA QUE SE LO TRADUZCAN

這是重要的通告，希請人譯讀。

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How does Public Health identify a case of COVID-19 in a school setting?

A. Public Health is notified of every case of COVID-19 in our region as soon as a test is complete. The Public Health teams then complete an investigation, typically within 24 hours, to identify all individuals the case was in contact with and all locations of potential exposures during their infectious period. If a case (staff or student) identifies attendance in a school during their infectious period, Public Health investigates and coordinates with the school to ensure that all contacts are notified and provided with appropriate instructions.

Q. Does every positive case in a school lead to an exposure?

A. No. The current school COVID-19 safety plans decrease the amount of exposure and transmission risk in schools and have been helpful in preventing exposures. Often, the amount of time a student or staff member diagnosed with COVID-19 may have spent in school is limited because they have already been self-isolating due to identified contact with a positive friend or family member, and did not attend school while infectious.

Q. If there is an exposure in a school does that mean that COVID-19 is spreading in our school?

A. No. Exposures occur when a case of COVID-19 was present in school during their infectious period. In the vast majority of cases, there is no transmission in the school setting. However, notifications are distributed out of an abundance of caution. The majority of COVID-19 transmission is within households.

Q. What does Public Health do if there has been an exposure in a school setting?

A. If a case attended school while they were infectious and there was risk of transmission within the school:

- 1) Public Health investigates to identify contacts within the school.
- 2) Public Health directly contacts anyone who was a close contact of the case, and asks them to self-isolate. This may apply to an individual or an entire class or cohort.
- 3) Lower-risk contacts may be asked to self-monitor. This may apply to an individual, or to an entire class or cohort.
- 4) Public Health closely monitors the class, division, cohort and school.
- 5) Updates to recommendations are directly communicated with those who are affected.



COVID-19 Health File



COVID-19
Symptom Assessment Tool
bc.thrive.health



BCCDC Self-Isolation Tips

Q. What can families expect around the timing of communicating COVID exposures?

A. When Public Health receives notification of a positive test result, Public Health immediately begins contact tracing. Investigations are typically complete within 24 hours. However, because the person with COVID-19 is usually already self-isolating and not attending school, the last exposure may be several days ago.

Q. What is self-isolation? Who needs to self-isolate?

A. Self-isolation is recommended for individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 and their close contacts. Self-isolation means staying home and avoiding situations where you could come into contact with others, even if you don't have symptoms. This is to prevent transmission of COVID-19. Those who need to self-isolate are contacted directly by Public Health. If you have not been contacted, you do not need to self-isolate. More information about self-isolation can be found at <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/self-isolation>

Q. What is self-monitoring? Who needs to self-monitor?

A. Self-monitoring means monitoring yourself daily for symptoms of COVID-19. Those who need to self-monitor due to a known school exposure to COVID-19 are contacted directly by Public Health. However, COVID-19 is circulating in our communities. Everyone should monitor themselves for symptoms of COVID-19 every day. Those who are sick should stay home.

Q. If a child is asked to self-isolate, what should the rest of the family do?

A. If possible, the rest of the family should minimize contact with the person who is self-isolating. Those who need to self-isolate are contacted directly by Public Health. If the affected child's family has not been contacted and asked to self-isolate, they can continue with their usual activities.

Q. What should I do if I develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19?

A. You should seek assessment and testing, and self-isolate while you wait for your test results.

Q. Is the wider school community notified if there is a case in a school?

A. Public Health prioritizes contacting individuals who have been exposed to a case of COVID-19. If an exposure has been identified in any school within the VCH region, a notification is posted publicly on the VCH website: <http://www.vch.ca/covid-19/school-exposures>

Q. What information can Public Health share with the school community?

A. In order to maintain privacy and confidentiality, Public Health does not disclose any names or identifying information about cases or contacts within the school community.



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Q. Why do recommendations sometimes differ between classrooms or schools?

A. Public Health conducts an investigation and risk assessment for every case of COVID-19 and every school exposure. Recommendations are specific to each particular exposure. Close contacts are asked to self-isolate. Lower risk contacts may be asked to self-monitor.

Q. Why are there COVID-19 cases in schools?

A. COVID-19 is circulating in our communities, and approximately 120,000 students and school staff members live in our region. Where there is COVID-19 in a community, we can expect cases of COVID-19 among students and staff. However, there are extensive measures in place to prevent exposures and transmission within schools. These include COVID-19 safety plans, and daily health checks for staff and students.

Q. Why is there a shorter list of symptoms for schools?

A. Through testing in B.C., we have found that people with mild symptoms infrequently test positive for COVID-19. The list of symptoms of concern in the school setting was shortened in order to minimize disruptions to classroom learning, while ensuring that we can detect true cases of COVID-19. Children with mild symptoms can still be tested if desired.



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