



Healthy and Safe Schools

2021-22 Guidelines for COVID-19 and
other Infectious Diseases



Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

This document will be adjusted as necessary to reflect the latest public health information. Please refer to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's website for the most recent document.

Healthy and Safe Schools

2021-22 Guidelines for COVID-19 and other infectious diseases

October 29, 2021



This is a living document intended to inform the school community on the healthy and safe return to school. As new information becomes available, the directives will be re-evaluated and adapted throughout the school year accordingly.

Last year the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, in consultation with Public Health, released directives to school districts and schools to provide for a safe return to school for students and school personnel. Our plans, along with the cooperation of school personnel, students and parents, allowed our students to learn throughout the year with minimal disruptions to learning, limited cases in schools and very few in-school transmissions.

While New Brunswick benefits from having relatively high vaccination rates, COVID-19 is not going to disappear entirely. Variants continue to emerge across the world and new research becomes increasingly available. The province and our schools will continue to see COVID-19 cases throughout the school year. This is why we will continue to implement layers of protection and everyone should continue to follow protective health measures to help limit the spread of COVID-19 and minimize disruptions to learning through the year. By continuing to follow best practices and protective health measures as we transition to living with COVID-19, we can support students in a more normal day-to-day life, so they enjoy their childhood to the fullest.

VACCINATION

COVID-19 vaccines are effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalizations, long-haul COVID, and death. Based on what we know about the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines, having a high number of people vaccinated within a population provides both individual and community protection. This will reduce the overall number of people who test positive for COVID-19. However, it is expected that there will still be some people who test positive and experience milder symptoms, even if they have received two doses of the COVID-19 vaccinations.

As COVID-19 vaccines are not yet approved for children under the age of 12, we will need the help of individuals, communities and businesses to help keep schools healthy and safe for students. That's why we strongly encourage students 12 and older to be vaccinated and require school personnel to be vaccinated.

Last spring, we worked with Public Health to create opportunities for eligible students and school staff to be vaccinated. We will continue to collaborate with partners across government to increase access to vaccines across the education system throughout the school year, particularly once a vaccine becomes available for individuals 12 and under. This will be done in collaboration with Public Health.

As of November 19, 2021, all school personnel and school district staff will be required to have received two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine or provide a medical exemption certificate.

Students who are eligible to be vaccinated (born in 2009 and earlier) unless medically exempt can participate in indoor or outdoor extracurricular and intramural activities. These students may remove their masks **ONLY** when playing sport activities or when using wind instruments. Students who were born between July 1st and December 31st, 2009, will have until October 31st, 2021 to receive two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to be permitted to continue participating in these

Healthy and Safe Schools

2021-22 Guidelines for COVID-19 and other infectious diseases

October 29, 2021



activities. Unvaccinated students 12 years of age and older can NOT participate or be involved in any form of indoor or outdoor extracurricular and intramural activities.

Students under the age of 12 can continue to participate or be involved in any form of indoor or outdoor extracurricular and intramural activities.

There will still be individuals who are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 within the school system. That's why it is important that we continue to use various layers of protection every day, or when there are increased case numbers within a community. Schools will continue to encourage and model kindness, respect, and patience throughout the school year.

GENERAL HEALTH GUIDELINES

Symptoms

Everyone in the school community has an important role to play in fostering a healthy school environment. Students and school personnel who have two or more symptoms or who are feeling sick, must stay home. If students or school personnel have two (2) or more symptoms, they will schedule a PCR test on the government website [COVID-19 Self-Assessment](#) or call 811. Rapid testing can not be used if an individual has one or more symptoms.

COVID-19 symptoms include:

- Fever
- A new cough, or worsening chronic cough
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Headache
- A new onset of fatigue
- Diarrhea
- Loss of sense of taste
- Loss of sense of smell
- In children, purple markings on the fingers and toes
- Difficulty breathing

Students or school personnel who have been identified by their primary care provider as having asthma, seasonal allergies or who suffer from chronic runny nose/nasal congestion are not excluded from school based on these symptoms.

Healthy and Safe Schools

2021-22 Guidelines for COVID-19 and other infectious diseases

October 29, 2021



Schools will not request proof of a negative test result or a doctor's note before the student or staff member returns to school.

Symptomatic Students and/or School Personnel

- The school must have an area designated for school personnel or students who become symptomatic during the day to isolate while waiting to be picked up. Pick-up is to occur within an hour of notification. Parents must be aware that this is an expectation.
- Students with two or more symptoms must be immediately separated from others in a supervised area until they can go home. Where possible, anyone providing care to a symptomatic student should maintain a distance of two metres and wear a mask.
- Symptomatic school personnel must immediately isolate from others and wear a community mask until they are able to leave the building.
- Hygiene and respiratory etiquette must be practiced while the symptomatic student/school personnel is waiting to be picked up.

Hand washing

Good hand washing practices help reduce the spread of germs. This has helped prevent students and teachers from getting sick by reducing the spread of illnesses such as COVID-19, the common cold and stomach flus. School personnel will encourage appropriate hand hygiene practices before, during, after outdoor play, before and after meals, and after using the toilet. Signs will be posted throughout the school to remind everyone to properly wash and sanitize their hands.

Students and school personnel will be required to clean their hands with hand sanitizer before entering the classroom. School personnel will monitor younger students to ensure that they are washing their hands correctly.

Masking

Masks have been an important layer of protection in reducing the spread of COVID-19 as well as other respiratory illnesses. Students and school personnel must wear a mask all day at school, in common areas and in classrooms. The mask may ONLY be removed while eating or drinking. School personnel who are fully vaccinated may remove their mask for instructional purposes or while alone at their desk or office but must wear them if engaged in physical activity or in common areas.

Healthy and Safe Schools

2021-22 Guidelines for COVID-19 and other infectious diseases

October 29, 2021



Promote Respiratory Hygiene Practices

Good respiratory hygiene practices include covering the mouth and nose with a tissue or elbow when coughing or sneezing, throwing the tissue into the garbage after use, and immediately washing or sanitizing hands. These practices will continue to be incorporated into classroom curriculum and students will be taught healthy respiratory hygiene practices.

Water Fountains

The use of bubbler (spout) component on water fountains is not permitted. For bottle fillers on fountains, students and school personnel will ensure that their water bottle does not come into contact with the nozzle when refilling their water bottles. Signage will be posted reminding students and staff to properly use the stations when refilling bottles.

Ventilation

Ventilation and air exchange contribute to a healthy school environment. A working group on ventilation systems in schools was established early on in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and included representatives from WorkSafeNB, Public Health, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. As part of a related initiative to ensure good air quality in schools, air quality testing was carried out in schools that did not have integrated or mechanical ventilation systems last spring and the department has launched a pan-provincial, multi-year program to promote optimal learning and working environments with good quality ventilation.

The department is currently working with school districts to promote healthy air circulation within schools. School districts are ensuring ventilation systems are set to provide the maximum fresh air intake recommended for the system. Other means of natural ventilation include, when practical, the use of operable windows and opening doors to promote air circulation.

Fans will not be allowed in schools. If the outdoor temperature including the humidex is 36° Celsius and above, students will be learning from home. This will depend on the ventilation and cooling system in each school. School districts will direct this process.

Learning will shift to home learning with school personnel continuing to report to school and students learning from home. Teachers will be expected to be available online and depending on student age group may be expected to be offering direct instruction and assist students.

School personnel will be allowed the use of fans as long as they are alone in a classroom or office.

Student transportation

To reduce the risk of transmission on the bus, parents are encouraged to drive their child to school if they are able. This will help to reduce the number of students on the bus and support physical distancing.

Healthy and Safe Schools

2021-22 Guidelines for COVID-19 and other infectious diseases

October 29, 2021



School buses will be disinfected daily. Students are encouraged to sit in the same seats and with the same students as much as possible. Students must wash or sanitize their hands before leaving home in the morning. Bus drivers will continue to use curtains installed on buses last year.

All individuals on a bus will be required to wear a mask, except for a bus driver when driving or if the curtains are deployed.

Community Use of Schools

The use of indoor spaces under the [Community Use of Schools](#) will be limited to youth-based activities and organizations. Students 12 years of age or older, unless they have a medical exemption certificate, will need to be vaccinated. All adults accompanying these children will be vaccinated. Vaccinated spectators will be permitted inside the school.

On weekends, Community Use of School for auditoriums, and theatres will be permitted. Vaccinated spectators will be permitted to enter the school during these activities. The Community Organizations must follow all requirements in the Mandatory Order for masking, vaccination, and physical distancing.

Long-term agreements for the ongoing use of designated school space by outside organizations as outlined in the [Community Use of Schools](#) may operate as per the agreement with proof of vaccination for individuals 12 and over or a medical exemption certificate.

Following these activities, all frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, handrails, etc. must be cleaned and disinfected by the school districts. The community organization will be responsible to cover these additional costs.

Ensure Adequate Cleaning and Disinfection

Schools will be cleaned and disinfected regularly. Custodians will disinfect daily all frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, handrails, cafeteria tables, etc.

If a community experiences a high rate of transmission of COVID-19, or if there is evidence of any in-school transmission, there will be special focus on disinfecting. For instance, this may require students to sanitize their hands before and after using shared materials or disinfecting the shared material such as gym and physical activity equipment, musical instruments, common use school supplies, and other materials or items used by multiple students.

Disinfecting products will be available in easily accessible, age appropriate areas in classrooms to encourage school personnel and students to self-clean and disinfect, in case there are outbreaks.

HOW WILL THIS YEAR BE DIFFERENT FROM LAST YEAR?

- **Regular group sizes** for Kindergarten to Grade 5 classes*;
- **Full-time attendance** for high school students;

Healthy and Safe Schools

2021-22 Guidelines for COVID-19 and other infectious diseases

October 29, 2021



- **Interscholastic** and **Extra-Curricular** and **Intramural** activities will be allowed with restrictions*;
- **Cafeterias and meal programs** will return to normal operations; and
- **School buses** may transport students at full capacity*.

** Public Health may impose restrictions on these classes and activities if there is a case in a school or an increased number of cases in a region.*

KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 8

COVID-19 vaccines have not been approved for children under the age of 12. This means students from Kindergarten to Grade 8 will not be vaccinated before the start of the 2021-22 school year. Keeping our schools healthy and safe as we continue to live with COVID-19 will depend on the help of individuals, businesses and communities.

The directives for Kindergarten to Grade 8 will be re-evaluated regularly, including once students under the age of 12 are eligible for COVID-19 vaccination.

Schools will work at adding extra layers of protection similar to the 2020-21 school year for our younger students, such as:

- Kindergarten-Grade 8 class groupings whenever possible:
 - Contact between classes will be restricted in common areas, cafeterias and outdoors when an increase of COVID-19 cases are present in a region.
 - School administrators will look for ways to keep distance between the class groupings in common areas such as hallways, cafeterias and others as much as possible. For example, changing schedules for lunch to have less people in the cafeteria, at outdoor recess or other recesses between classes for students in Grades 6 to 8 in order to minimize the number of students in the hallways.
- Students and school personnel will wear masks when inside the school.
- Hand washing as part of the regular school routine.
- Students regularly disinfecting desks and other commonly touched surfaces.
- Physical education classes will be taught outdoors whenever weather permits. If taught indoors, students must wear masks.
- Music education classes will be taught outdoors whenever weather permits. If taught indoors, students must wear masks and the use of wind instruments is not permitted.
- Activities and learning are encouraged to be held outdoors when the weather permits.
- Only bubble-friendly field trips that take place outdoors will be permitted.
- Assemblies will not be permitted, while concerts and other student gatherings etc., will be organized virtually.

Healthy and Safe Schools

2021-22 Guidelines for COVID-19 and other infectious diseases

October 29, 2021



- Students under the age of 12 who are not eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine can continue to participate or be involved in any form of indoor or outdoor extracurricular and intramural activities. These students may remove their masks ONLY when playing sport activities or when using wind instruments outdoors during these activities.
- Students who are vaccinated (born in 2009 and earlier) unless medically exempt can participate in indoor or outdoor extracurricular and intramural activities. These students may remove their masks ONLY when playing sports activities or when using wind instruments. Unvaccinated students 12 years of age and older can NOT participate or be involved in any form in indoor or outdoor extracurricular and intramural activities.
- Individuals who are not fully vaccinated may not volunteer in a school or for any school-based activity, including extra-curricular activities. School personnel will follow the masking and vaccination guidelines if they wish to volunteer.
- As of October 29, 2021, vaccinated spectators will be permitted inside and outside the school during extracurricular activities. All spectators will respect all requirements in the Mandatory Order for masking, vaccination, and physical distance inside and outside the school. If school volunteers do not help to support the management of these requirements under the Mandatory Order for these activities, or if there are issues with regulating them, a school principal may refuse to allow spectators inside and outside the school.
- Visitors (including parents) who are fully vaccinated, are not allowed to enter the school prior to making an appointment and masks are required while inside the school.
- Visitors (including parents) who are unvaccinated and do not have a medical exemption are to arrange a meeting with teachers or school administration virtually. If not possible, parents must be masked at all times and maintain physical distancing.

GRADES 9 TO 12 (schools with only students in these grades)

Vaccination rates for children between the ages of 12-19 vary between health zones. The rate is not yet at a level where there would be protection for students and school personnel if an outbreak were to occur. For this reason, the following health directives will apply:

- Students and school personnel will wear masks inside the school.
- Physical education classes will be taught outdoors whenever weather permits. If the physical education class is taught indoors, students must wear masks.
- Music education classes will be taught outdoors whenever weather permits. If taught indoors, students must wear masks and the use of wind instruments is not permitted.
- Activities and learning are encouraged to be held outdoors when the weather permits.
- Hand washing as part of the regular school routine.
- Students regularly disinfecting desks and other commonly touched surfaces.

Healthy and Safe Schools

2021-22 Guidelines for COVID-19 and other infectious diseases

October 29, 2021



- Assemblies will not be permitted during school hours, while concerts and other student gatherings etc., will be organized virtually.
- Students who are vaccinated unless medically exempt can participate in indoor or outdoor extracurricular and intramural activities. These students may remove their masks ONLY when playing sport activities or when using wind instruments. Unvaccinated students can NOT participate or be involved in any form in indoor or outdoor extracurricular and intramural activities.
- Individuals who are not fully vaccinated may not volunteer in a school or for any school-based activity, including extra-curricular activities. School personnel will follow the masking and vaccination guidelines if they wish to volunteer.
- As of October 29, 2021, vaccinated spectators will be permitted inside and outside the school during extracurricular activities. All spectators will respect all requirements in the Mandatory Order for masking, vaccination, and physical distance inside and outside the school. If school volunteers do not help to support the management of these requirements under the Mandatory Order for these activities, or if there are issues with regulating them, a school principal may refuse to allow spectators inside and outside the school.
- Visitors (including parents) who are fully vaccinated, are not allowed to enter the school prior to making an appointment and masks are required while inside the school.
- Visitors (including parents) who are unvaccinated and do not have a medical exemption are to arrange a meeting with teachers or school administration virtually. If not possible, parents must be masked at all times and maintain physical distancing.

For high schools that also have students under the age of 12, mask wearing will continue and community use of school will continue to be limited to youth-based activities.

VISITOR LOG AND OTHER RECORD KEEPING

All schools will keep a daily log of all supply staff, itinerant school personnel, visiting professionals and other visitors that enter the building.

EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Early childhood services programs such as Talk with Me, Family and Early Childhood, Early Years Evaluation-Direct Assessment and Preschool Autism services will continue to be offered in schools during the day and after school hours.

As of November 19, 2021, all employees providing Early Childhood services will be required to have received two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine or provide a medical exemption certificate.

Parents may accompany their children but must remain masked at all times. Participants in these services should be separated from the school population when possible.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND TRAVEL

International students will meet the requirements issued by the Federal Government prior to attending a New Brunswick school. Students and school personnel who travel for vacation or to visit a parent as part of a formal custody arrangement will also meet the federal requirements.

VULNERABLE STUDENTS

The Canadian Pediatric Society supports the return to school for children dependent on the current pandemic phase in a geographical location. If a student has extraordinary medical requirements that would require them to learn from home in a normal school year, the school will work with the student, the parent and the student's pediatrician or medical provider to develop personalised learning plans.

In the event of an outbreak, schools may work with immunocompromised students who have chosen to continue to physically attend school, their families and pediatrician or medical provider to determine the steps in extraordinary situations.

The IWK Health Centre has defined immunocompromised as being a person who:

- is having chemotherapy currently or have within the last 6 months
- is having radiation therapy
- has received a bone marrow transplant in the last year or Graft Versus Host Disease
- is a recipient of a solid organ transplant
- has sickle cell disease
- has a spleen that does not work
- has a genetic cause for immune dysfunction
- has HIV/AIDS
- is taking immunosuppressive medication
- has other history of immune suppression, as defined by a Physician.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Additional supplies and safety precautions may be required when working with students. In most cases this equipment would already be in place pre-pandemic and part of a student's Personalized Learning Plan, Individualized Behaviour Support Plan and/or Health Support Plan (Policy 704 – [Health Support Services](#)).

In the rare case that the required equipment is not already in a plan, the Education Support Services Team, in consultation with the Occupational Health and Safety Coordinators, will create a plan outlining the equipment needed, how this equipment will support the health and safety of the student and school personnel working with the student, and the proper use of the equipment.

MENTAL HEALTH

We will focus on building a culture of respect, kindness and mindfulness by promoting and modelling safe and healthy behaviours. We will continue to collaborate with schools and school districts to ensure adequate supports and resources are in place to respond to the needs of students and school personnel including training, work to improve access to services and implementation of the curricula. Any additional resources put in place for wellness and mental health in the 2020-21 school year will remain available.

CONFIRM CASE MANAGEMENT

School Absenteeism Guided Measures

School administrators will notify the Regional Public Health Office in cases of outbreaks or unusual situations, such as when absenteeism of students or school personnel is greater than would be expected, or severe illness is observed.

Confirmed case

There will continue to be cases of COVID-19 in schools throughout the school year. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and Public Health will continue to support schools and school districts to manage outbreaks, mitigate the risks in schools, and keep students in the classroom to the greatest extent possible. School districts will continue to inform families when a positive case of COVID-19 has an impact on a school community or when there is in-school transmission along with any impact the confirmed case may have on learning.

When a case or cases of COVID-19 are confirmed within a school, Regional Public Health works with the school and school district staff to carry out a detailed risk assessment. This Public Health assessment looks at a number of factors including but not limited to:

- how prevalent cases are within the greater community;
- whether the case involves a presumed variant;
- how many close contacts the individual who tested positive has had and how early the case was detected;
- the layers of protection that were in place while they were at school such as masking or assigned seating;

Healthy and Safe Schools

2021-22 Guidelines for COVID-19 and other infectious diseases

October 29, 2021



- the use of shared spaces between the individual who tested positives and others (lockers, hallways, kitchens, breakrooms, etc.); and
- the COVID-19 vaccination rate of the school or greater community.

Once the risk assessment is completed, Public Health gives direction to students and school personnel based on all these factors within the circumstances of each individual situation. This is why two schools may respond to confirmed cases differently.

Public Health may recommend that a school follow:

- Rapid testing program (POCT) **OR**
- Self-isolation process

Case Management Process

- The Regional Medical Office of Health will notify the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development as per the communication protocols of the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in a school in their school district. All other confirmed case(s) will be communicated to the department.
- The school district or the school will inform the school community of a positive case of COVID-19 in their school and that students and school personnel who are identified as close contacts will receive direction on the POCT program or isolation requirements
- School principals and school districts will work with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's COVID-19 team and Regional Medical Officer of Health to identify close contacts. Students and school personnel who are identified as close contacts will receive directions.
- Fully vaccinated students who have been identified as a close contact and have no symptoms of COVID-19 may return to school but must self-monitor for 14 days. If at any point during the 14-day period a student develop one symptom, they must stay home, self-isolate and book a PCR test with Public Health.
- Confidentiality of a confirmed case or close contacts is paramount. It is important that all personal health information remain confidential unless Public Health requires the information for contact tracing. Only a limited amount of personnel, on an as needed basis for contact tracing, will be informed of the name of the individual who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- Public Health, the school district, and the department will mutually decide which of the two processes will be followed: rapid testing program or self-isolation process. Once the process has been determined, it must be followed until the date directed by Public Health.

Rapid Testing Program (POCT)

1. Unvaccinated students who are identified as a close contact of a confirmed case may be provided with a POCT kit. Instructions on how to test and on the period of time required for daily testing will be provided with the kit. Students will receive the appropriate supply of POCT, depending on the last possible exposure date to the confirmed case.
2. Individuals who have only received one dose of the COVID – 19 vaccine are not considered vaccinated and are subject to the same POCT requirements as unvaccinated students and school personnel.
3. POCT kits will be picked up by parents as soon as they are available at a site identified by the district. School districts will communicate with families via email or voicemail to convey instructions. A parent can contact the school requesting that a POCT kit be sent home with the student.
4. Unvaccinated students will be required to self-isolate while they take their first two tests. Unless otherwise advised by Public Health, students will return to school once they have completed two negative tests taken on two separate days and if they have no COVID-19 symptoms.
5. If the student POCT tests show a positive result, then they must immediately isolate and book an online PCR test. Parents or students 16 years of age or older will need to indicate on the online form that the request for a PCR test is following a positive POCT and that the student is a close contact of a confirmed case in order to be prioritized. The school will also be contacted for the tracking of absences and the COVID-19-tracking process.
6. Participants in the POCT program must test daily to continue to attend school, childcare and participate in all extracurricular or intramural activities.
7. Unvaccinated students who choose not to participate in the POCT program will be required to follow the self-isolation process.

Self-Isolation Process

1. Regional Public Health will contact those individuals who must self-isolate. Public Health Officers will decide if a class or classes need to be sent home to self-isolate. They will inform the school principal and the school district of the actions needed.
2. If isolation is required, principals must ensure, in collaboration with Regional Public Health, that measures are in place to inform parents and school personnel of the situation and of how important this control measure is.
3. Regional Public Health Officers will monitor anybody who has been ordered to self-isolate.
4. In the event a school is required to close for an operational day, the superintendent will give the directives in collaboration with the Regional Medical Officer of Health.
5. Teaching and learning must not stop if students are required to self-isolate. As part of their preparations for the school year, school personnel must develop contingency plans for continued learning when students are not

Healthy and Safe Schools

2021-22 Guidelines for COVID-19 and other infectious diseases

October 29, 2021



physically able to be in school. For example, teachers may have kits that they can send home with younger students, they may be ready to teach online, etc.

6. Regional Public Health Officers will inform those individuals who have been ordered to self-isolate of when the order ends.

Online and home learning

As the school system learns to live with COVID-19, the system will need to adjust quickly. If students are sent home to self-isolate, teachers will be ready to ensure learning continues.

For students in Kindergarten through Grade 8, this may include home learning kits, homework or a mix of virtual and paper-based learning.

High school personnel will be ready to teach any student directed to learn from home online until they are able to return to school. This may include synchronous or project-based learning, but teachers will connect with students every day.