

**Health  
Services**

Office of the  
Medical Officer  
of Health

PO Box 667  
RPO Streetsville  
Mississauga, ON  
L5M 2C2  
tel: 905-799-7700

peelregion.ca

September 10, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

**RE: Safe reopening of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic**

Dear parents and guardians,

Peel Public Health is working with our local school partners to prepare for a safe reopening of schools.

Schools have developed school reopening plans to ensure the health and safety of everyone at the school. Reopening plans are based on guidance from the Ontario government, and in consultation with Peel Public Health, as requested.

This letter provides information on what your family can expect as schools reopen, and tips to help prepare your child(ren) for a successful and safe return to school.

**Changes to in-person learning**

When schools reopen this Fall, your child will notice changes within the school, and with school procedures. These changes will minimize the risk of COVID-19 for students and staff. They include:

- Daily [at-home screening](#) to ensure sick students and staff do not attend school.
- Quick isolation of sick students in a safe designated space with staff supervision until they can be picked-up.
- Cohorting: this means keeping pre-determined groups of students and teachers together.
- Non-medical masks are worn by students indoors on school property and on student transportation. Reasonable exceptions apply.
- Medical masks and eye protection are worn indoors on school property by school-based staff. Reasonable exceptions apply.
- Physical distancing, as often as possible.
- Practicing good hand hygiene by washing hands or using hand sanitizer frequently throughout the day.
- Enhanced cleaning practices.

For full details, refer to your school's reopening plan.

**Check for symptoms before going to school**

One of the most important actions you can do to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is to check your children daily for COVID-19 symptoms and keep them home if they are unwell. Use the [self-assessment tool](#) every day before school and follow the directions provided to seek care or testing if required.

**Staying home and being sent home**

If your child is not feeling well, has travelled outside of Canada within 14 days, or has been in close contact with someone who has or is suspected to have COVID-19, they must stay home. It's important that students be symptom free without medications to return to school safely.

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If your child has a fever, do not treat the fever with medications and then send them to school.

If your child gets sick while at school, they will need to be picked up as quickly as possible. For more details, check with your school.

Having a sick child stay home from school may not be easy for all families. Plan for the school year by asking someone in your social circle to pick up your child if the primary caregiver is not available. Make sure the school has your current emergency contact information.

### **Keep students healthy by practicing the following Core Four actions**

#### ***Stay apart***

- Talk to your children about how to maintain an appropriate physical distance from one another.
- Practice following directional signage inside public spaces, so they are familiar with what they mean. For example, arrows and other stickers on the floor in stores.
- If your child is taking the bus to school, explain the importance of staying in their assigned seat and entering and exiting the bus while maintaining an appropriate physical distance from others.

#### ***Lather up***

- Practice proper hand washing at home. Try using songs and games to help your child remember to wash for 20 seconds.
- Remind your child to use hand sanitizer throughout the day when hand washing is not an option.
- Teach your child to not share objects with other students. If using shared equipment at school, they should clean their hands before and after touching the object.

#### ***Mask up***

- The provincial government requires that students in grades 4 to 12 wear masks (certain exemptions apply).
- Mask use for students in kindergarten to grade 3 is strongly encouraged. Check with your school for their specific policy regarding mask use.
- Teach your child how to [safely wear a mask](#).
- Give your child a container or bag to store their mask during recess and lunch.
- It might help to have a few masks for each child to allow you time to wash them between school days.
- Explain to your child that some people are not able to wear a mask, and to be kind and understanding to those who are exempt.

#### ***Get tested***

- If you, your child, or anyone in your household is sick or has had close contact with anyone with COVID-19, they should get tested at the nearest assessment centre and stay home. Close contact means being within 2 metres of the person for 15 minutes or longer.

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**If someone in the school is ill or tests positive for COVID-19**

Peel Public Health has a clear protocol for when a student or staff member becomes ill while they are at school, including isolation, and providing personal protective equipment to the ill student and staff attending to them.

In the case that someone tests positive for COVID-19, Peel Public Health will:

- contact the student (and their parents) or staff member who tests positive for COVID-19.
- work with the school administration to identify close contacts.
- make recommendations for testing and isolation.
- determine whether a class or school must be closed.

Be assured there is a clear communication process, so you will know if an individual in your child's school tests positive for COVID-19 and whether any closures will take place. We are committed to working closely with our local schools and broader school community to communicate updates.

**Virtual learning option**

If your child will be staying home to learn during the school year, talk to them about how this school year will be different. Look for ways to get them to take part in physical activity and find safe ways for your child to get together with their peers.

**Support for families**

We understand school reopening is a challenging and stressful time for families, and we'll continue to work with our school partners to keep our school communities safe. Check out our school reopening webpage at and Region of Peel on social media for more information: <https://peelregion.ca/coronavirus/school-reopening/>

If you have COVID-19 related questions, call Peel Public Health 905-799-7700 (Caledon 905-584-2216), Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,



Monica Hau  
(on behalf of Dr. Lawrence C. Loh, MOH)

**Monica Hau, MD, MSc, CCFP, FRCPC**  
Associate Medical Officer of Health  
Public Health, Health Services