

September 9, 2020

Dear Parent or Guardian,

**Re: Toronto Public Health School Health Services and Important Updates During COVID-19**

Ensuring the health and safety of school children is our shared priority. As you make plans for your child/children to return to school this September, I would like to provide you with some important information about COVID-19 prevention measures and Toronto Public Health school health services for this year.

**Check your child for symptoms each day before school**

Each day before you send your child/children to school, you must [check](#) to see if they have any [COVID-19 symptoms](#). If they have any of these symptoms, or if they are sick or have had close contact with someone who has COVID-19, keep them at home. Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 should get tested at an [assessment centre](#).

**Teach your child how they can protect themselves from COVID-19**

We strongly encourage parents to follow the public health guidelines directed by their schools and school boards, including:

- **Wash hands:** Reinforce with your child the importance of washing their hands well with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially if they touch their face or mask, and before and after eating.
- **Physical distance:** Remind your child to stay two metres/six feet from others at school as much as possible.
- **Masks:** Teach your child about the [proper use of masks](#) and [how to safely put on and take off a mask](#).

**Updates on COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic is changing all the time, and we understand that this is a challenging time for schools, staff, students and parents. We will continue to provide updates to schools and school boards as new information is confirmed. There are many resources available on our website at [www.toronto.ca/COVID19](http://www.toronto.ca/COVID19), including [mental health resources](#). You can also learn more about the current health situation, affected City services, and economic supports at this website.

I encourage you to read our new [resources for parents and caregivers](#) called Preparing for School during COVID-19 and the COVID-19 School Protocol. These resources provide a range of information that you may find helpful, including what happens if someone in the school community becomes sick with COVID-19. I also encourage anyone in your family who has a cell phone to download Health Canada's [COVID Alert app](#) so you can be notified directly if you have been in close contact with someone who was contagious with COVID-19.

### **School Health Services**

Services that Toronto Public Health usually provides at schools are not being offered this year as we focus our efforts on the local COVID-19 response. Some updates that you may find helpful include:

- **Vaccinations for Students**

Clinics in all schools are suspended for the fall of 2020. Students in grades 7/8 can still receive their vaccinations for Hepatitis B, HPV and Menactra at Toronto Public Health community clinics later in the fall, by appointment. We will notify you when these clinics open.

Reviews of immunization records for all students are also cancelled for the remainder of the year. Routine vaccinations are an essential health service, and are available from a student's health care provider. Vaccines provide individuals with protection from non-COVID-19 diseases. Students visiting their health care providers for scheduled or urgent visits should not delay vaccinations at this time.

- **Dental Services**

Dental screening services are temporarily suspended in schools where they were regularly offered, but are still available at Toronto Public Health dental clinics, by appointment. Please call 416-338-6565 for more information.

If you have any questions about COVID-19, please call the Toronto Public Health Hotline at 416-338-7600.

We should all expect to see some cases of COVID-19 in our schools, and Toronto Public Health will be working hard to support your school community in both preventing COVID-19 and responding to any cases and outbreaks that occur. Please remember the most important thing you can do is to keep your child home from school when they are sick.

Thank you for all that you are doing to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community, including in our school communities. We all have a role to play, and we will get through this challenging time together.

Sincerely,



Dr. Eileen de Villa  
Medical Officer of Health