

Symptom Based PCR & RAT Testing Policy

Introduction

In response to the evolving situation related to the COVID-19 Omicron (B. 1.1.529) variant of concern (VOC), the Ministry of Health has provided interim public health guidance on case, contact, and outbreak management for child care settings, including updated guidance for enhanced screening using polymerase chain reaction (PCR) and rapid antigen testing (RAT).

Purpose

The government has continued to monitor the COVID-19 situation in the province, including ongoing risks related to variants of concern (VOCs). The current goal is to mitigate further transmission in Ontario by managing individuals with the highest risk of transmission (e.g., household contacts, acute care, and congregate living contacts), mitigating outbreaks and transmission among vulnerable individuals at risk of severe outcomes. The Ontario government is committed to keeping child care settings open for in-person attendance.

Symptom Based PCR & RAT Testing

PCR tests or RATs (contingent on provincial testing supply), may be used when a child/student or staff member is exhibiting the following symptoms:

- Fever and/or chills; OR
- Cough; OR
- Shortness of breath; OR
- Decrease or loss of taste or smell; OR
- **Two or more of:**
 - Runny nose/nasal congestion
 - Headache
 - Extreme fatigue

- o Sore throat
- o Muscle aches/joint pain
- o Gastrointestinal symptoms(i.e.vomiting or diarrhea)

While awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test, or if testing is not available, the individual and their household members, regardless of vaccination status, must remain at home and isolate as per the instructions below: Where an individual is experiencing symptom(s) listed above and does not have access to a PCR test or RAT:

- The individual is presumed to have COVID-19 based on their symptoms and should isolate as per the below criteria for those who test positive on a RAT or PCR test. The number of Omicron cases is rising rapidly in Ontario such that individuals with symptoms indicative of COVID-19 can be presumed to be infected with COVID-19.

All household members of the symptomatic individual, regardless of vaccination status, should isolate while the symptomatic individual is isolating due to the high rate of transmission that may occur within households.

If they develop symptoms, they should follow isolation directions for symptomatic individuals and seek testing if eligible for testing.

Where an individual has **only one** of the following symptoms, or a different symptom (e.g., pink eye), the individual should isolate until symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms are present), and household members are not required to isolate:

- Runny nose/nasal congestion
- Headache
- Extreme fatigue
- Sore throat
- Muscle aches/joint pain
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (i.e. vomiting or diarrhea)

Test Results

Positive COVID-19 Test (PCR, rapid molecular, or rapid antigen)

Individuals who test **positive** on a COVID-19 test (PCR, rapid molecular, or rapid antigen) should isolate immediately.

- If the individual is 12 years of age or older **AND** either partially vaccinated, or unvaccinated, they must isolate for **10 days** from the onset of symptoms, or from the date of their test (whichever came sooner).
- If the individual is immune compromised (regardless of age and vaccination status) they must isolate for **10 days** from the onset of symptoms, or from the date of their test (whichever came sooner).
- If the individual is 12 years of age or older **AND** fully vaccinated they must isolate for at least **5 days** from symptom onset **AND** until their symptoms have been improving for 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms are present), whichever is longer in duration.
- If the individual is 11 years of age or younger (regardless of their vaccination status), they must isolate for at least **5 days** from symptom onset **AND** until their symptoms have been improving for 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms are present), whichever is longer in duration.

All household members of an individual who tests positive, regardless of vaccination status, should isolate while the symptomatic individual is isolating. If they develop symptoms, they should follow isolation directions for symptomatic individuals, and seek testing if eligible/available.

PCR

- Public health units can send all school and child care related COVID-19 cases confirmed with a lab-based PCR test to the Provincial Workforce (PWF) for initial contact.

- The PWF will provide cases with isolation instructions as well as testing and isolation information to be passed onto their household members and other high-risk contacts (a virtual handout will be provided).

RAT

- A positive RAT is highly indicative that the individual has COVID-19. A positive RAT does NOT need to be confirmed with a PCR test.
- Positive RATs do NOT need to be reported to the public health unit, school or child care.

Note: There is no requirement for parent(s)/guardian(s) to report their child's PCR/RAT results to the school or child care as part of absence reporting.

Negative COVID-19 Test

PCR

Individuals who test negative on a PCR test must stay home until their symptom(s) have been improving for 24 hours (48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms are present).

RAT

If two consecutive RATs, separated by 24-48 hours, are both negative, the symptomatic individual is less likely to have COVID-19 infection, and the individual should isolate until symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms are present). The household members of the symptomatic individual with two negative tests may also discontinue isolation if there are two consecutive negative RAT results, separated by 24-48 hours.

Exposure to a Positive or Presumed COVID-19 Case

All cases (i.e. people who test positive on PCR, rapid molecular, or rapid antigen test OR who are presumed positive) should notify high-risk contacts of their exposure.

Individuals only exposed at school with all public health measures in place are not generally considered high-risk contacts. However,

depending on the nature and frequency of the interactions, specific individuals could be considered a high-risk contact (e.g., break room close unprotected contact).

Where a child, student, or staff member has been advised from a case that they may have been exposed to a positive case of COVID-19 at school, they should monitor for symptoms and seek testing if eligible/available.

If the contact does not have symptoms, has not been advised to isolate due to an exposure to a case/symptomatic individual in the community, and continues to pass the COVID-19 Child Care Screening, they may continue to attend child care.

Cohort Based Dismissals

Public health units will no longer be dismissing cohorts. Any dismissals or closures of a school or child care will be contingent on operational requirements determined by Early Adventures Child Care Centre

Early Adventures Child Care Centre will make every effort to keep our individual programs and the centre open and operational. Cohorts will only be dismissed if a staff member is absent in the designated cohort due to symptoms of Covid-19 and/or if the staff tests positive for Covid-19 and as a result we are unable to operate the program.

Given the widespread transmission and inability to test all symptomatic individuals, Early Adventures Child Care Centre will not be routinely notifying families of cohorts with a positive case, or if a child is absent due to symptoms associated with COVID-19.

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