RENFREW COUNTY AND DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): for School Boards, Schools and Parents

1. What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Common symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever greater or equal to 37.8°C
- New or worsening cough
- Shortness of breath

Other symptoms can include:

- Sore throat
- Difficulty swallowing
- Changes in sense of smell or taste
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- Runny nose or nasal congestion (different than usual allergy symptoms)

Atypical signs and symptoms of COVID-19 should be considered, particularly in children:

- Unexplained fatigue, malaise or muscle aches
- Delirium (acutely altered mental status)
- Unexplained falls or functional decline
- Exacerbation of chronic conditions
- Chills
- Headaches
- Croup

For the full and updated list of symptoms, please refer to the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms.

2. What is meant by "a close contact"?

A close contact is generally defined as an individual who had close prolonged (more than 15 minutes) exposure within 2 metres lasting around the time the individual who tested positive was ill.

For the full and updated definitions, please refer to: Management of cases and contacts of COVID-19 in Ontario

3. What is meant by "Suspected case", "Probable case" and "Confirmed case"?

The descriptions "Probable case" and "Suspected case" should be assumed to mean the same thing.

Basically, a suspected/probable case is when:

- An individual has any symptoms of COVID-19 **AND** has been in close contact with a confirmed case.

A person awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test is not considered to be a suspected/probable case UNLESS they have been in close contact with a confirmed case.

A "Confirmed case" is when a person has a positive laboratory test for COVID-19. They will be contacted directly by Public Health.

Special rules will be declared by Public Health if your child's school experiences an outbreak of COVID-19 (as per Public Health announcements). Please **refer to Question #13.**

For the full and updated definitions, please refer to: Case Definition—Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19).

4. What is meant by "self-isolate"?

Stay at home, avoid contact with others, keep your distance, wash your hands, cover your cough and sneezes.

For the guidance on how to self-isolate, please refer to: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) How to Self-Isolate.

5. My child has symptoms of COVID-19, what should I do?

You should complete the following school self-assessment online every morning for your child. This will give you advice on what to do in a variety of different scenarios. If your child fails the school self-assessment, follow these next steps:

- Keep your child home from school
- Your child should self-isolate at home away from any siblings if possible.
- You should arrange for COVID-19 testing for the child with symptoms.

- Household contacts (roommates and family that live in the same house as the child with symptoms) should self-monitor for symptoms, and do not need testing if they do not have symptoms.
- Household members (roommates and family that live in the same house as the child/individual with symptoms) can continue to attend school and work with careful attention to physical distancing, masking and hand-washing rules.

You can contact the Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre (VTAC) at 1- 844-727-6404 to find out where and when to get your child tested. Taking your child directly for COVID-19 testing does not break the rules of self-isolation, providing you go directly to the testing site and return directly home after testing.

Please note that RCDHU is not arranging COVID-19 testing, as calls now should be directed to RCVTAC at 1- 844-727-6404.

6. When can my child go back to school?

a) If your child has a negative COVID-19 test, they can return to school 24 hours after their symptoms start improving and they do not have a fever (without medication) for 24 hours. ***They DO NOT need a health care provider note in order to go back to school.***

b) If your child only has one symptom commonly associated with other illnesses, such as a runny nose or headache, you will be advised to keep the child at home for 24 hours. Your child can return to school if their symptoms are improving.

c) If they have 2 or more symptoms, they must stay at home until they are able to consult with a health care provider and receive an alternative diagnosis or a negative COVID-19 test.

d) If your child feels better but you are still waiting for the test result, your child should stay off school and self-isolate at home until the test result is known.

e) If your child was not tested, they should self-isolate for 14 days, unless **all** the following apply:

- A health care provider diagnosed them with another illness
- They do not have a fever (without using medication)
- It has been at least 24 hours since their symptoms started improving (if they had symptoms)

f) If your child has a positive COVID-19 test, you will be contacted by Public Health directly with more detailed advice.

7. My child has had a negative COVID-19 test, but they seem to be getting more unwell and I am worried. What should I do?

Contact your health care provider. If you do not have, or cannot access your health care provider, call VTAC 1-844-727-6404 and you will be given an appointment for a health care provider to call you at home.

8. My child has symptoms of COVID-19. I have no symptoms and am awaiting the results of the COVID-19 test for my child? Can I continue to go to work?

Yes, you can return to work as long as you haven't been identified by public health as a **close contact** of someone who tested positive to COVID-19 and are not symptomatic. It is important that you self-monitor for symptoms and pay careful attention to physical distancing, masking and hand-washing rules.

For the guidance on how to self-monitor, please refer to: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) How to Self-Monitor.

If any members of your household test positive for COVID-19, you will be contacted by Public Health directly with more detailed advice.

9. My child tested positive for COVID-19, do they need to have a negative COVID-19 test result or a note from a healthcare provider in order to return to school after recovering from COVID-19?

No. Children can return to school if they have completed their 14 days of self-isolation and provided that the child has no fever is and symptoms are improving for at least 72 hours.

10. Do school staff need to have a negative COVID-19 test result or a note from a healthcare provider in order to return to school after recovering from COVID-19?

No. School staff can return to school if they have completed their 14 days of self-isolation provided that the staff has no fever and symptoms are improving for at least 72 hours.

11. If someone in my child's school tests positive for COVID-19, do I need to get my child tested?

If someone from a school setting tests positive for COVID-19 and your child is **not** considered a close contact, you do **not** need to have your child tested or keep them home. RCDHU will reach out to parents directly if it is determined that their child is considered a close contact and provide advice on, if and when testing is required.

12. What happens if someone in my child's class tests positive for COVID-19?

If someone in a school setting tests positive for COVID-19 and your child is a close contact, a RCDHU case and contact staff member will contact you directly with information on how and when to get tested for COVID-19 and further actions to take.

13. Do I need to self-isolate (stay home from work) if someone in my child's class tested positive for COVID-19?

No. You can continue to work as long as your child is able to care for themselves, and your child remains asymptomatic. If your child develops symptoms, see Question #5.

14. What is considered an outbreak in a school?

An outbreak would be declared in a school once it has been determined that there are two positive cases with an epidemiological link (e.g. these children could have become infected with COVID-19 at school either from each other or a common source). Each case will need to be assessed and it would need to be determined that transmission occurred in the school before confirming it as an outbreak since it is possible that students or staff could have been infected outside the school setting.

15. What happens when there is an outbreak in a school?

If an outbreak in a school is confirmed, RCDHU would reach out to parents of close contacts to let them know and help them with the next steps which include staying home, monitoring for symptoms and testing when it's appropriate. RCDHU would continue to investigate to determine any other close contacts and monitor the situation until an outbreak can be declared over. This includes whether a classroom and/or the entire school would need to be closed.

16. What is Renfrew County and District Health Unit's Role?

- Support School Boards in their reopening plans and provide public health information and support implementing provincial standards and guidance.
- Facilitate knowledge exchange through various platforms with stakeholders and the school community by ensuring ongoing engagement and active listening.
- Provide infection prevention and control advice to schools for both in-school and transportation scenarios.
- Manage COVID-19 cases and outbreaks, including providing guidance to schools on confirming and controlling outbreaks.
- Support testing and surveillance of the school population.
- Provide ongoing support though a dedicated Public Health School Nurse who will be assigned to an area of schools and can assist in responding to school specific inquiries and make regular visits to the schools.
- Provide age-appropriate resources on COVID-19.
- Provide Mental Wellness Support including the development of school resources and tools on topics like resiliency, positive coping skills, and reducing stress and anxiety.
- Facilitate linkages to resources and community supports available for school staff, students and their families.