

Renfrew County and
District Health Unit

"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"

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Health for all Schools E-Newsletter

For Educators in Renfrew County and District

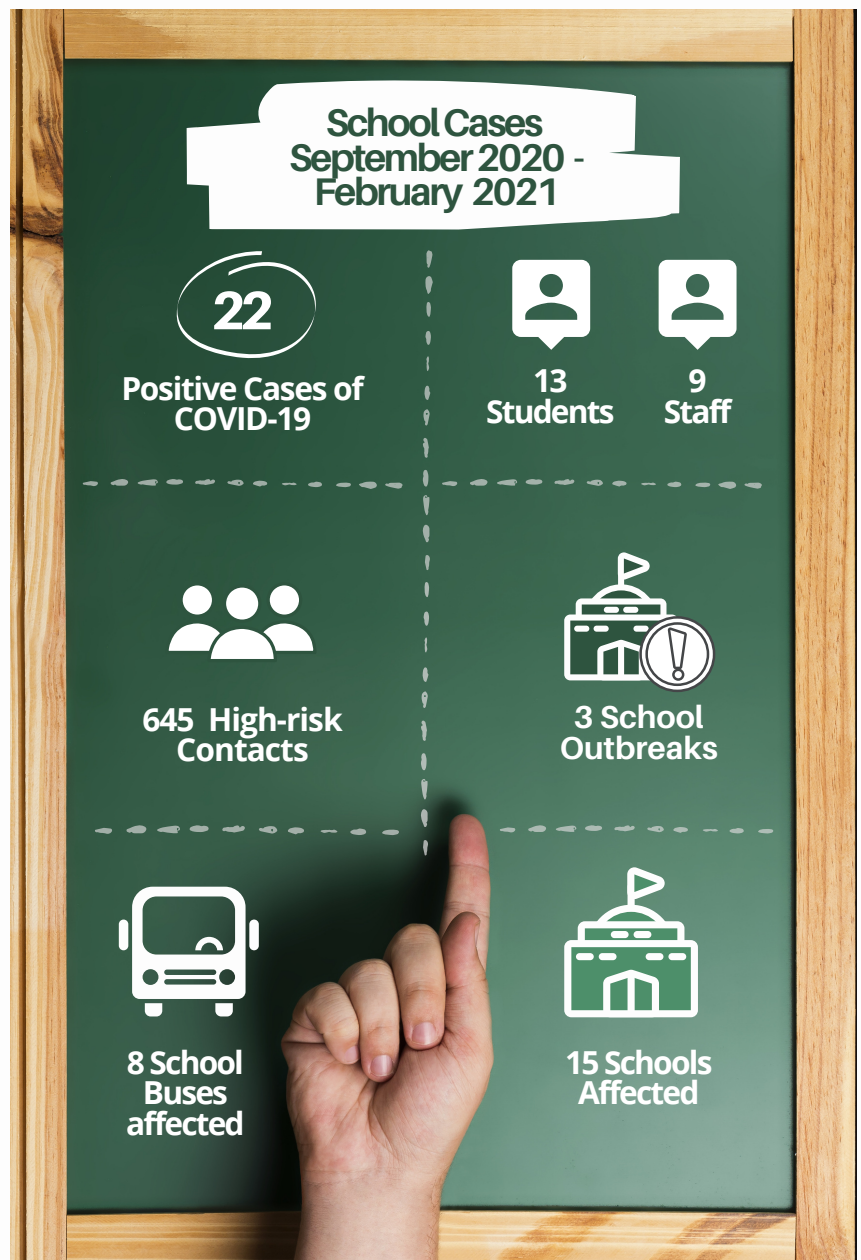
COVID-19 School Snapshot

Since the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year, Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) has been working with our local schools to minimize transmission of COVID-19 and keep everyone safe. RCDHU would like to take this opportunity to commend the work of our local educators and all school staff, students and families for all your hard work in keeping our school communities safe. There has been minimal school transmission of COVID-19 so far. **Keep up the great work!**

This graphic provides a snapshot of what has happened up to **February 17th, 2021** in Renfrew County and District (RCD) schools.

Number of COVID-19 cases in Schools

Between September 2020 and February 2021, RCDHU has confirmed 22 laboratory-confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 in schools throughout the county, and has declared three school outbreaks.



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COVID-19 Safety During Outdoor Winter Play

Outdoor play, even in winter, is vital for the health of our children. As always, children should play indoors if the temperature or the wind chill falls below -25 °C (-13 °F). At this temperature, exposed skin freezes in a few minutes.

Proper clothing will ensure children enjoy their time outdoors and avoid injuries and frostbite that can spoil their fun. Make sure children wear a hat, boots, hoods and jackets without drawstrings, and neckwarmers instead of scarves. Avoid using neckwarmers in place of masks as they do not form a seal around the nose and mouth and may not be made of the recommended material.

These are some extra precautions to take during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Identify areas where students can put on and take off their winter clothes while maintaining physical distancing. Consider alternate spaces such as hallways and within classrooms or staggering schedules to avoid crowding.
- If hooks, cubbies or lockers are used to store winter clothes, assign alternating or non-consecutive spots to help maintain physical distancing.
- When putting on or taking off winter clothes indoors, ensure physical distancing and consistent mask use.
- Ensure winter clothes are stored and allowed to dry when not in use. Wash winter clothes regularly and dry thoroughly at home.
- Replace masks that become wet or frozen in cold weather. Ensure access to multiple masks throughout the day for students, teachers and school-based staff to replace masks that become wet. If someone must remove their mask while outdoors, try to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres.

With these tips in mind, children can safely participate in outdoor activities and enjoy everything winter has to offer, while preventing injury, frostbite and COVID-19.

For further information, visit:



Public Health Ontario - [COVID-19 Cold Weather Tips for Schools factsheet](#)



Parachute Canada - [Winter Outdoor Safety for injury prevention](#)

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No Health Without Mental Health

The pandemic is approaching its one-year anniversary. Children and youth are reaching out to community mental health resources in record numbers. Now is a good time to acknowledge feelings of loneliness, boredom and anxiety; and reinforce positive coping skills and resilience.

As educators, you're in an ideal position to create a mentally healthy classroom, model and implement everyday practices that support student mental health, and notice students who may need additional support. From teaching plans to educator training modules, check out the great resources available on the [School Mental Health Ontario](#) website, including a new COVID-19 Action Kit with virtual field trip videos to use with your students.

We have updated our list of recommended [on-line mental health teaching resources](#). And, as always, our collection of [teaching kits](#) are available to borrow. Email schoolhealth@rcdhu.com to reserve your resources and they will be sent to your school.

Staff Mental Health and Well-being:

Visit [Tips and Tools to Support School Staff Well-Being](#): This video series, designed and developed by the Sinai Health Department of Psychiatry, provides educators and staff with practical skills and techniques on managing stress and emotions during these unprecedented times. Resilience Coaches draw from their own experiences of supporting their health care colleagues during COVID-19.

Nurturing Healthy Eaters

According to a recent CAMH webinar on mental health in children and youth, Kids Help Phone reported a two-fold increase from last year in calls related to eating habits and body image. Body image is our beliefs and feelings about how we look and what our body can do. Positive body image is linked to good self-esteem, confidence and resilience.

COVID-related anxiety, boredom and isolation can lead children and youth to use food for comfort or to feel a sense of control. This can be a problem if it becomes a preoccupation and contributes to poor body image, or exacerbates weight-based stigmatization, the most common cause of bullying in schools. Students experiencing weight stigma are more likely to have increased depression and anxiety, avoid physical activity, engage in unhealthy eating practices, and have poor attendance and academic achievement.

The Ontario H&PE curriculum (Gr 1-8), 2019. P.42 emphasizes that sensitivity regarding weight, body shape and personal values regarding 'what is healthy' are important when considering instruction.

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Educators can learn about [Mental Health and Weight Bias in Schools](#) and how to support inclusive and safe environments for all. Learn how to reframe messages about food, activity, bodies and health to avoid references to weight. Focus on the enjoyment of food and engaging in fun physical activities, but recognize that factors such as income, genetics, education and social connection may have more influence on a student's health than their health behaviours.

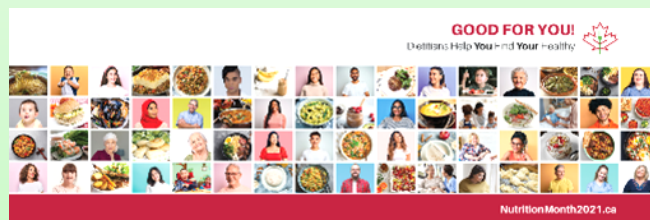
[Nurturing Healthy Eaters in Elementary Schools](#) and [Nurturing Healthy Eaters in Secondary Schools](#) provide tips for schools to support

body positive image. Learn to teach nutrition in a positive way, that honours natural body diversity and supports children to respect their natural hunger and fullness cues. Avoid fear-based statements like "that food is not healthy".

If you suspect a student is struggling with food and weight preoccupation, or dangerous eating, specialized resources are available. Visit [NEDIC.ca](#) for further information and access to their helpline; and family doctors can refer to registered dietitians, mental health and eating disorder programs.

Nutrition Month 2021

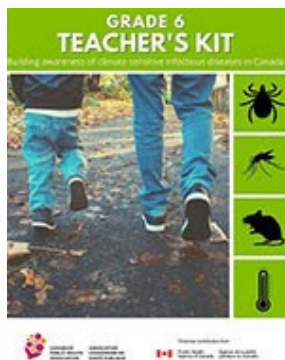
March is Nutrition Month! The theme for this year is [Good for you! - Dietitians help you find your healthy.](#)



Healthy eating looks different for everyone. This year's campaign explores how culture, food traditions, personal circumstances and nutritional needs all contribute to what healthy looks like for each of us.

👉 Visit Dietitians of Canada for an [Activities and Ideas Guide](#) to help families celebrate healthy eating at home. Note: these are also available in French.

👉 Use RCDHU's [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance - Food in Schools](#) resource to help guide the use of food in your classrooms.



Grade 6 National Poster Contest: Infectious Disease and Climate Change

👉 Visit [The Canadian Public Health Association](#) for complete contest information. Students learn more about climate sensitive infectious diseases like Lyme disease and West Nile virus, while sharing awareness and prevention information. **Contest due date: May 14, 2021**

👉 Check out the [Grade 6 Teacher's Kit: Building awareness of climate sensitive infectious diseases in Canada](#)

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