

# MY CHILD HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS A CLOSE CONTACT OF A COVID-19 CASE... **NOW WHAT?**

When a person is confirmed to have COVID-19, the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit (HNHU) conducts an investigation to gather more information. We ask questions of the person who has COVID-19 (or their parents/guardians) and may also contact the school/child care/transportation services to gather information to understand who may be at risk of exposure.

## WHY IS MY CHILD A CLOSE CONTACT?

The HNHU considers a number of factors when determining who is a close contact of a COVID-19 case (including dates, duration and nature of interactions with the case and vaccination status).

After investigating the current situation, we have concluded that your child may have been exposed to COVID-19 by:

- being a part of the same cohort as the case (e.g. classroom, school bus, before or after school programs, etc.)
- being less than 2 metres (6 feet) apart, for cumulatively 15 minutes or more
- not being fully vaccinated/previously positive

\*please see below for definition of fully vaccinated/previously positive

## HOW DO I ISOLATE MY CHILD?

- Your child has to stay in their own home throughout the isolation period, unless they leave to be tested or for an urgent medical reason. Your child may go outside, but must remain on your property.
- Do not have any visitors to your home while your child is isolating.
- If possible, have your child use a separate bathroom and bedroom. If this is not possible, clean common spaces, such as washrooms, after each use and commonly touched surfaces (like door knobs, light switches, counters, etc.) regularly.
- Encourage your child to wash their hands often with soap and water. Give them a paper towel or a cloth towel that is just for them to use.
- Do not share items with your child (like a drinking glass, utensils, etc.) unless washed thoroughly between uses.
- Your child is not allowed to attend any activities (sports, clubs, events, play dates etc.) during their isolation period.
- If there are vulnerable people who live in the home, they should not provide care for your child unless necessary.
- For children who are part of a shared custody agreement, where possible, parenting exchanges should not take place when a child is isolating, and should only resume once the isolation period is over.

## DO FAMILY MEMBERS NEED TO STAY HOME FROM SCHOOL/CHILD CARE OR WORK AS WELL?

- If your child is, and remains, symptom free **and has not received a positive COVID test result**, other household members who are not fully vaccinated/previously positive must only leave the home for essential purposes:
  - ✧ Leaving the home to get tested for COVID-19 or to seek medical attention.
  - ✧ Leaving the home for essential reasons and returning immediately back home.
    - Attending work, school, childcare and essential errands such as groceries, medical appointments or picking up prescriptions.



- Household members are not to leave home for activities such as sports, clubs, retail shopping, religious services etc.
- Household members must also not visit with friends or family members that do not live in the household.
- If leaving the house for essential reasons, household members must follow all public health prevention measures (e.g. physical distancing, hand washing, wearing a mask, etc.).
- Household members who are fully vaccinated/previously positive and are asymptomatic are not required to “stay home except for essential reasons.”
- Please read the section below titled “WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CHILD DEVELOPS SYMPTOMS?” to understand how this will impact the isolation period for your child and their household members.
- Caregivers and other members of the household should monitor themselves for symptoms of COVID-19.

### **FULLY VACCINATED STUDENTS:**

It may be necessary for the HNHU to dismiss an entire cohort until verification of vaccination status has been completed. Students who are fully immunized and asymptomatic would be allowed back in the school. Students who have been exempt from isolation will receive notification from the Health Unit that they may return to school.

\*Please Note: Students with a mask exemption will be required to isolate if identified as a high risk close contact, regardless of vaccination status.

#### **Definition of a fully vaccinated individual**

- An individual  $\geq 14$  days after receiving their second dose of a Two-dose COVID-19 vaccine series or their first dose of a One-dose COVID-19 vaccine series

#### **Definition of previously positive individual**

- An individual who had a confirmed COVID-19 infection as was cleared by Public Health within the past 90 days
- If it has been more than 90 days since your COVID-19 infection, and you do not meet the definition of fully vaccinated, you are required to follow the guidelines for unvaccinated individuals.

## **COVID-19 TESTING**

### **WHY SHOULD I TAKE MY CHILD FOR TESTING, THEY DON'T HAVE ANY SYMPTOMS?**

It is important to get your child tested because they have had an exposure to COVID-19. It is possible to get a positive test result and to be infectious to others without having any symptoms.

It is recommended that testing be completed on or after day 7 post exposure to COVID-19. Public health staff will advise you of the recommended day to get your child tested to achieve the most accurate results.

### **WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CHILD'S TEST RESULT IS NEGATIVE?**

Your child must continue to isolate for the full time period indicated by the health unit, even if they don't have symptoms

and even with a negative test result. This is because the COVID-19 incubation period (the period between exposure to the virus and the start of the first symptoms) can be up to 10 days from the time they were last exposed to the virus.

### **WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CHILD'S TEST RESULT IS POSITIVE?**

If your child receives a positive COVID-19 test result, you will be contacted by public health and provided with further direction. Most children with COVID-19 will have mild symptoms and are able to recover at home with a caregiver without needing hospitalization.

### **WHAT HAPPENS IF I CHOOSE NOT TO GET MY CHILD TESTED?**

If your child who was exposed to a COVID-19 case currently has, or develops, symptoms and you choose not to have your child tested, they will be considered a probable COVID-19 case. Other household members, who are not fully vaccinated/previously positive, may be required to isolate for the remainder of the child's isolation period, plus an additional 10 day isolation period.

If your child does not have symptoms and you chose not to have them tested, please follow the isolation instructions listed above in the section titled "DO FAMILY MEMBERS NEED TO STAY HOME FROM SCHOOL/CHILD CARE OR WORK AS WELL?"

### **WHERE CAN I TAKE MY CHILD TO GET TESTED FOR COVID-19?**

You can arrange for a COVID-19 test for your child at a local testing site. The following sites are available in Haldimand and Norfolk County:

- Norfolk General Hospital (Simcoe) - 519-426-0130 ext. 2234
- Haldimand War Memorial Hospital (Dunnville) - 905-774-7431 ext. 1000
- West Haldimand General Hospital (Hagersville) - 905 768 3311 ext. 1113

If you would like to book a test in another jurisdiction (e.g. Brantford, Hamilton, Tillsonburg), visit [www.COVID-19.ontario.ca/assessment-centre-locations/](http://www.COVID-19.ontario.ca/assessment-centre-locations/) for a list of other COVID-19 testing sites.

### **WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CHILD DEVELOPS SYMPTOMS?**

If your child develops COVID-like symptoms they need to remain in isolation at home, and it is important that you contact the HNHU School Health team to inform them of the symptoms. They can be reached at 519-426-6170 ext. 3285. The HNHU will begin contact tracing for your child and provide guidance around a repeat COVID-19 test.

If your child requires immediate medical attention, call 911 or take the child to your nearest Emergency Department, but call ahead to inform the hospital that your child has been identified as a close contact of a COVID-19 case.

If your child develops symptoms, all household members who are not fully vaccinated/previously positive are required to isolate until one of the following has occurred:

- your child receives a negative COVID-19 test result
- your child receives an alternative diagnosis from a healthcare professional
- it has been 10 days since your child's symptoms started and they have been symptom-improving for at least 24 hours or 48 hrs if gastrointestinal symptoms (eg. diarrhea, vomiting)

All household members who are not fully vaccinated/previously positive will also need to isolate and stay isolated for an additional 10 days from the last contact with your child with symptoms.

To help reduce the impact of this isolation requirement, some families may elect to have some or all of the household member isolate away from the child starting when they first learn of their child's COVID-19 exposure, as outlined below.

- If your family's home layout allows, families have the option to have one designated adult, who already lives with the child, isolate with the child, separate from other household members, for the duration of the isolation period (e.g. a parent and child isolating together in the basement with their own bedroom and washroom, not sharing meals together or common living spaces with other household members). It would be best if the same parent/caregiver stays with the isolating child to help limit the exposure
- Alternatively, if your child is old enough and independent enough to isolate on their own, and they can do so separate from the rest of the household, this is an option as well.
- For young children, the designated caregiver, if not fully vaccinated/previously positive, should wear a mask when in close contact (within 2 metres). For older children we recommend they keep as much distance as possible from the people they live with and wear a mask or face covering that covers their nose and mouth if they need to be within 2 metres of household members and when in common areas such as hallways.

### **WHEN CAN MY CHILD RETURN TO SCHOOL/CHILD CARE?**

Your child can return once the self-isolation period determined by public health has been completed AND symptoms have been improving for 24 hrs or 48 hrs for gastrointestinal symptoms.

If your child is tested and is negative, they must still complete their 10-day self-isolation before returning to school/child care.

### **WHY DOESN'T THE HEALTH UNIT SHARE WHO THE PERSON IS THAT TESTED POSITIVE?**

Due to privacy laws, the HNHU will not release personal or identifying information about any staff or student who is ill unless deemed necessary. All efforts will be made to protect the privacy of individuals who have been diagnosed.

### **WILL I RECEIVE CALLS FROM HNHU THROUGHOUT THE ISOLATION PERIOD?**

No, you will not receive calls from HNHU. The School Health team at HNHU will communicate via email unless deemed necessary to follow up with a phone call.

If you have questions please contact the HNHU COVID-19 School Health Team at 519-426-6170 ext.3285 and leave your name, contact details, and a detailed message stating you have questions about your child/student isolating (and include the name of the school/child care setting). A public health professional will return your call as promptly as possible.

You may also visit [www.hnhu.org/COVID19](http://www.hnhu.org/COVID19) for additional information. For general COVID-19 questions, not related to your child isolating as part of a COVID-19 exposure within their cohort, please call the HNHU COVID-19 Hotline at 519-426-6170 ext 9999

Updated September 24, 2021