



March 17, 2022

Dear parent/guardian,

This letter is to inform you of provincial changes to public health measures in schools that will come into effect on March 21, 2022, and emphasize particular measures that continue to be in place. The changes are informed by key public health indicators such as positivity rates and hospital admissions, which continue to improve across Ontario. Halton's case rates and health system indicators are similar to those of the province. However, there is still a risk of COVID-19 transmission in the community and we need to be mindful that the risk of infection and severe disease is greater for some individuals than others, including those who are immune-compromised, those with underlying health conditions, and older adults.

Halton Region Public Health will continue to work closely with Halton school boards, to limit the spread of COVID-19 in schools. While some public health measures will be lifted on March 21st, several protective measures will remain in place, including a focus on good hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and daily screening, ventilation improvements, access to Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs), and access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for staff, strengthened by rising rates of youth vaccination.

### **Provincial changes effective March 21:**

#### **Masking**

While masking will no longer be required for most students, staff, and visitors in schools and during student transportation, masks will be required in certain circumstances such as:

- Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 and have completed a minimum of 5 days of isolation can return to school but will be required to mask until Day 10.
- Close contacts and household contacts of individuals with COVID-19 who do not have to isolate are required to wear a mask for 10 days after exposure.
- Individuals who have recently traveled outside of Canada, have to wear a mask for 14 days upon return.

Wearing a mask is an effective public health measure for reducing the spread of COVID-19, and many students and staff may choose to continue to wear masks when at school depending on their own risk, the risk of those close to them, vaccination status, and comfort level.

Halton Region Public Health is working with school boards to promote respectful, welcoming, and inclusive practices within their school communities. We encourage parents/guardians to speak with their children about being respectful of others regardless of their choice.

#### **International Travel**

Upon return from international travel, under [current federal travel requirements](#), for the first 14 days, individuals must wear a mask at all times when in public spaces (including schools and childcare) and continue to monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

Regional Municipality of Halton

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It is important for families who traveled over the spring break to be aware of COVID-19 [travel restrictions](#) as they change frequently. [Children under 12 years old, travelling with fully vaccinated adults](#) are exempt from self-isolation and no longer need to wait 14 days before attending school, camp, or daycare.

### Daily Screening

While the daily on-site confirmation of screening for students and staff will no longer be required, staff and students must continue to self-screen every day before attending school. The [COVID-19 school and child care screening tool is updated to](#) include self-isolation and masking requirements. Your child should not attend school if they are sick.

### Isolation Requirements

Individuals with symptoms of COVID-19 and who have not tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days, are presumed to have COVID-19 and should self-isolate immediately for a minimum of 5 days or until COVID-19 is ruled out by testing.

Household members without symptoms of COVID-19 who live with a confirmed case or someone with symptoms, are no longer required to isolate if they:

- are 17 or younger and have received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine, OR
- are 18+ and have received three doses of COVID-19 vaccine, OR
- have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days and completed their isolation period.

For detailed information on COVID-19 testing and isolation requirements please visit our website at [Halton.ca/covid](https://halton.ca/covid)

### Cohorting

Cohorting and distancing will no longer be required in schools. Students can play and learn together across cohorts, classes, and grades, both indoors and outdoors and during lunch and recess. With limitations on in-person gatherings and assemblies being lifted, schools may choose to plan and host in-person events such as proms, graduations, and classroom celebrations.

### Vaccination

As of March 16, 90% of 12-17 year olds have received two doses of vaccine, but only 20% have received a third dose which is more protective for the Omicron variant. For the 5-11 year old group, 65% have received their first dose and 46% have received a second dose. As other public health measures are gradually lifted, being vaccinated is the best protection against COVID-19 and an important way to reduce the spread. We urge everyone to receive all doses of the COVID-19 vaccine that they are eligible for, including boosters.

All Halton Community and Paediatric Clinics accept walk-ins (no appointments needed). For information on locations, dates, and times, please visit [halton.ca/covidvaccines](https://halton.ca/covidvaccines). The vaccine is also available at [participating pharmacies](#), primary care offices, and [GO-VAXX bus locations](#).

The Province and Halton Region Public Health will continue to monitor and update the public on key indicators related to COVID-19 transmission to assist members of the public with making informed decisions about the measures they use to protect themselves and those around them.

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The Province and Halton Region Public Health will also provide additional guidance in response to rising rates of COVID-19 if necessary.

While key indicators are improving, COVID-19 transmission continues in our community. Some of us may be comfortable with the lifting of restrictions while others may be anxious or uncertain. We need to respect and support each other as a community during this transition period. Please be kind and respectful of others' choices. Compassion and kindness are essential as we make the transition to fewer restrictions together.

Thank you for doing your part to keep our community safe by following public health measures. Please continue to remain vigilant, stay home when sick, and get vaccinated and boosted when eligible.

Sincerely,

Halton Region Public Health

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