



February 8, 2021

Halton Region Public Health
1151 Bronte Road
Oakville ON L6M 3L1

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The Ministry of Education announced last week that schools in Halton will reopen to in-person learning on Monday, February 8. This is welcome news for our school community.

We had a highly successful in-person school year from September to December, with minimal transmission of COVID-19 in Halton schools and very few outbreaks. This shows that the infection prevention and control measures that schools have been following in consultation with Public Health have been effective in protecting our educators and students. Thank you for your continued adherence to public health measures in support of our school community. Halton Region Public Health continues to consult with both privately and publicly funded schools, to stress ongoing vigilance and additional health and safety measures put in place by the Ministry of Education. For more information, please visit Ontario's [COVID-19: Reopening Schools](#) webpage.

As schools re-open, I would like to highlight some key information for you:

Masks at school

Students in grades 1-12 must wear face coverings in schools, including hallways and during classes, on school transportation, and outdoors where physical distance cannot be maintained. Consider providing extra masks/face coverings for your child to use during colder temperatures as face masks become wet after a short period of time outdoors. Masks need to be changed when they become wet or soiled. Please see our [Use of Non-Medical Masks or Face Coverings in Schools](#) fact sheet for more information.

Daily screening for COVID-19

Students and school staff must continue to check for symptoms of illness every day before going to school using the [COVID-19 school and child care screening](#) tool. School boards are now required to have enhanced on-site screening protocols in place for secondary students, all staff, and visitors by conducting daily on-site confirmation of self-screening. Please contact your school or school board for more information about enhanced screening protocols.

Variants of Concern (VoC)

Variants of the COVID-19 virus have been detected in Ontario, including in Halton. These variants are transmitted in similar ways to COVID-19 but may be spread more easily. It is now even more important to follow all infection prevention and control measures to stop the spread of the virus.

Regional Municipality of Halton

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COVID-19 testing

You may have heard that the Ministry of Education is expanding COVID-19 testing for students and staff across the province. There are different types of COVID-19 testing available and a summary can be found on [Halton Region's COVID-19 Information and Guidance webpage](#) (see **Testing and results** under COVID-19 core information).

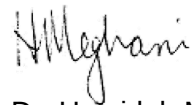
For individuals who have symptoms of COVID-19 or were exposed to someone with COVID-19, the preferred testing is by molecular PCR test, which is available through [assessment centres](#) and some physician offices. Students, school staff and visitors who do not pass their daily COVID-19 screening should get tested. Testing at the local assessment centres is easy to access and our turnaround times for test results in Halton are very good.

When there is concern of ongoing COVID-19 transmission at a school, Public Health will work with school boards and Ontario Health partners to make the molecular PCR testing more accessible for the particular school community. This is a rare situation and in Halton, we have not required this for any of our schools to date.

Widespread routine testing of asymptomatic (those who have no symptoms) students and staff is not planned at this time. Health units would use this testing in areas of high community transmission or if there is poor local access to PCR testing.

As you return to school, I appreciate your ongoing efforts to keep our families and school communities safe. My wish is for each and every student, educator and staff person to have a successful and happy rest of the school year.

Sincerely,



Dr. Hamidah Meghani,
Medical Officer of Health