

HALTON REGION PUBLIC HEALTH • Office of the Medical Officer of Health

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TO: Halton Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Emergency Departments

FROM: Dr. Deepika Lobo, Associate Medical Officer of Health

DATE: March 4, 2021

RE: COVID-19 school screening updates, Variants of Concern and respiratory virus test information

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### **UPDATED COVID-19 SCHOOL AND CHILD CARE CENTRE SCREENING**

- The [COVID-19 screening tool for schools and child care centres](#) has been updated.
- As part of the new screening tool, all staff and children with ONE new or worsening symptom of COVID-19 must stay home until:
  - Negative COVID-19 test is received;
  - An alternative diagnosis by a doctor is made; or
  - Self-isolation is completed for ten days from symptom onset and they are feeling better.
- Household contacts of symptomatic individuals are required to quarantine until the symptomatic household member:
  - Receives a negative COVID-19 test result or
  - Receives an alternative diagnosis by a doctor.

### **UPDATED COVID-19 VARIANT OF CONCERN (VoC) GUIDANCE**

- As of March 4, 2021, Halton Region has 97 VoC COVID-19 cases.
- [COVID-19 Variant of Concern: Case, Contact and Outbreak Management Interim Guidance](#) was recently updated, to reflect a lower threshold for risk assessment.
- Household members of high-risk contacts are required to stay home, except for essential reasons, for the duration of the contact's quarantine period.

### **RESPIRATORY VIRUS MULTIPLEX PCR TESTING**

- Multiplex Respiratory Virus PCR (MRVP) is not being performed on all specimens submitted for COVID-19 testing.
- MRVP is only being performed by request for patients that meet PHO Laboratory's acceptance criteria for this testing (e.g. hospitalized, outbreaks, institutionalized).
- If patients meet testing criteria, MRVP can be ordered on the same swab submitted for COVID-19 testing.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- [COVID-19 Variant of Concern: Case, Contact and Outbreak Management Interim Guidance](#), February 26, 2021, Ministry of Health
- [Respiratory Viruses \(including influenza\) test information](#), Public Health Ontario

Please report all suspected/confirmed cases of [Diseases of Public Health Significance](#) to Public Health immediately by calling 311, 905-825-6000 or toll free at 1-866-442-5866.

PLEASE POST IN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS AND PHYSICIAN LOUNGES – IF YOU CAN'T ACCESS HYPERLINKS OR DIDN'T RECEIVE IN FULL, PLEASE EMAIL [DOCTORS@HALTON.CA](mailto:DOCTORS@HALTON.CA) FOR ELECTRONIC COPY.