

January 24, 2022

Dear Parent/Caregiver,

This is a difficult time to be a parent and/or caregiver, and the return to in-person learning is a tough decision to make. As a parent myself, I can strongly empathize with your concerns about your child's well-being as school resumes. I want to assure you that Peterborough Public Health (PPH), in partnership with your District School Board (DSB), is working diligently to ensure protective measures are in place for the prevention of COVID-19 transmission in schools.

Peterborough Public Health will be working with school administrators to monitor absenteeism due to illness. PPH will also be reviewing rapid antigen test/PCR test reporting. When an assessment of these indicators exceeds thresholds that demonstrate spread of COVID-19 in a school, PPH will recommend students who are not fully vaccinated be dismissed from school for up to five days. PPH will continue to support schools in reviewing and implementing public health measures. These recommendations are being made in consultation with the Provincial Government's Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

These actions will help to stop the spread of COVID-19 infection in schools.

Continued Risks of COVID-19 & Transmission

As the COVID-19 omicron variant continues to spread in our community, I want to remind students, school staff, and their families that the risk for a COVID-19 infection is higher than ever before. It is important that everyone takes the necessary precautions to reduce the risk that a COVID-19 infection may have on their health. As students are in close proximity, transmission of the COVID-19 virus is likely if proper masks are not worn and distancing is not maintained. Students should not come to school if they have symptoms associated with COVID-19 or if other household members have symptoms. Complete the [COVID-19 school screen](#) before going to school every day.

Rapid Antigen Testing & Reporting

When Rapid Antigen tests (RAT) are used by students we request caregivers voluntarily submit results (negative or positive) to PPH using a confidential site. The tool allows you to report the name of the school that your child attends. This grouped evidence will complement school absenteeism rates. The RAT reporting tool can be found at <https://chkmkt.com/RAT21> or by scanning this QR code:



Vaccination Remains the Best Strategy for Protection Against COVID-19

The best protection against serious illness from a COVID-19 infection is vaccination. Students aged 5 - 17 are now eligible to receive two doses (children must be at least 5 years old at the time of vaccination), while residents 18 years of age or older are eligible for three doses.

Appointments are available through the provincial booking system <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine/> or by calling for assistance at 1-833-943-3900. Children who still need their first dose may also attend the primary care-led evening clinics at the Healthy Planet Arena without an appointment starting January 24th. Planning is underway for additional school-based clinics. For more information, please visit the Peterborough Public Health Vaccine Clinic Calendar on our website at www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca/clinic.

Residents are encouraged to wait 56 days (8 weeks) after receiving their first dose to receive a second dose to complete the COVID-19 vaccine series. A second dose can be booked after the first dose is administered.

Learn more about the paediatric COVID-19 vaccine, or find a clinic near you by visiting <https://www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca/novel-coronavirus-covid-19/covid-19-youth-vaccines/>

Thank you for your continued collaboration through this difficult time in the pandemic and I wish the best to you and your families.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Dr. Thomas Piggott, MD MSc CCFP FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health and CEO
Peterborough Public Health