

Fact Sheet: Slowing the Spread of COVID-19

School guidance: COVID cases – what happens?

Guidance for schools in the current context of COVID-19 recognizes the critically important roles that these settings play in the lives of students and families. Enhanced public health measures offer additional layers of protection compared to informal, social settings. Public health guidance such as vaccination, symptom screening, physical distancing and cohorting where appropriate, hand hygiene, testing and the use of masks are all designed to help prevent the introduction of COVID-19, as well as reducing the spread.

Reporting / contact tracing

Nova Scotia is changing its response to COVID-19 exposures in school settings.

During this time of high case numbers, Public Health is focusing on preventing severe disease in high risk settings. Accordingly, Public Health is no longer contact tracing in schools and families will not receive notification of exposures.

Moving forward, these cases will be treated like other infectious illnesses such as colds or influenza (flu). In schools, students and staff should continue to inform the school principal if they are home sick and may choose to report the reason for their absence e.g., if they have tested positive for COVID-19. The principal will continue to notify Public Health as per existing absence reporting protocols.

What does this mean for families and staff?

There is a layered approach to slowing the spread of COVID-19 in schools. Anyone with symptoms should stay home and get tested. Close contacts of a known case in their [household](#) or non-school, community interaction should follow public health guidance that is available online [Information for COVID-19 Close Contacts | Nova Scotia Health Authority \(nshealth.ca\)](#).

To access testing for individuals with symptoms, go to [COVID-19 Testing | Nova Scotia Health Authority \(nshealth.ca\)](#). The Test to Protect program provides additional tests for students and staff, which will be supplied through the school.

Families are not required to identify individuals their child interacted with at school. They should contact the school like they do for other illnesses such as colds or influenza (flu) if their child is going to be absent and may choose to identify that their child has tested positive. Schools will arrange ways to ensure the student's learning continues, as regularly happens when a student is absent for illness.

Staff are not required to identify and notify individuals they were in contact with at school but should follow existing processes to report their absence from work.

What does this mean for the principal/school?

Families and/or students may still contact the school to report that they have tested positive for COVID-19. In such instances, schools will direct families and/or students to the Public Health protocols related to a [positive COVID-19 test](#).

Schools are not expected to notify the families or staff of positive cases or participate in contact tracing. Schools will follow existing public health practices of tracking absences and report to Public Health when the absence rate is above 10%.

It is also possible that a school may receive a call requesting information on a student/staff member who is not a relation to the caller. Schools are not at liberty to provide such personal health information and should refer the caller to the Public Health guidance.

Self-isolation information for close contacts

More information about close contacts can be found at www.nshealth.ca/closecontact.