

Attending school in person is important for a student's education and well-being. Every school in BC has a COVID-19 health and safety plan. This plan details what a school must do to safely operate. It also outlines the things staff, students and families can do to help. Together, these measures help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in schools. When COVID-19 is in a community, there is a risk that COVID-19 can be in schools within the community.

We all have a role to play to keep our schools safer.

What Schools Are Doing

Schools have many health and safety measures to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. These include:

- **Schedules and Spaces** have been reorganized to prevent crowding. Students and staff are given as much space as possible to keep apart from others.
- Students and staff are organized in **Learning Groups** to reduce the number of people they see each day.
 - In secondary schools, these are groups of up to 120 staff and students.
 - In elementary and middle schools, these are groups of up to 60 staff and students.
- **Cleaning** is done every day throughout the entire school. Things that are touched often are cleaned at least twice a day.
- There are also more places to **clean your hands**.

What Students, Parents and Caregivers Can Do to Help

Students, parents and caregivers help keep each other safer in many ways. These include:

- **Doing a daily Health Check.** This means checking your child for COVID-19 symptoms every day before school.
 - Students, parents or caregivers can use the Ministry of Education [K-12 Health Check App](#), [BC Self-Assessment Tool](#), or follow the guidance from [BCCDC](#).
- **Keeping your child home if they are sick or self-isolating.** Use the [BC Self-Assessment Tool](#), or follow guidance from [BCCDC](#) to know what to do if you or your child is sick. Call 8-1-1 or your healthcare provider if you have any questions.
- **Physical Distancing.** This means reducing close contact with others. Help your child know when and how to practice physical distancing.
 - Within learning groups avoid physical contact and spread out as much as possible.
 - Outside of learning groups keep 2 metres of space between people whenever possible.
- **Cleaning your hands often.** Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.
- **Wearing a mask.** [Masks](#) provide some protection to you and to those around you.
 - Middle and secondary students should wear a mask on buses and indoors at school except when:
 - sitting or standing at their seat or workstation in a classroom or learning space; or
 - there is a barrier in place; or
 - eating or drinking.
 - Elementary students don't have to wear a mask at school. Talk to your child if you'd like them to wear a mask at school and when they should wear one.

Public Health Support in Schools

Sometimes people have COVID-19 and don't know it. Nobody means to bring COVID-19 into a school. If a staff or student tests positive for COVID-19:

1. Public health officials ask the staff or student when their symptoms started and where they've been. This helps public health know if they were able to spread COVID-19 at school.
 - If they were able to spread COVID-19 at school, this is called an **exposure**. Public health notifies the school district and begins contact tracing.
 - If they were not able to spread COVID-19 at school, public health still notifies close contacts outside of school.
2. Public health determines who at school is a close contact. These are usually staff or students who spent a lot of time around the person who tested positive.
 - Staff or students who are close contacts need to self-isolate. They will be contacted by public health through a phone call or letter.
3. Staff, students or families who are not close contacts are told about the exposure through **exposure notifications**. These are letters sent from school or posted on the regional health authority's website. They are sent after close contacts are contacted by public health. If your child is not a close contact, they do not need to self-isolate. This means your child can still attend school.

Public health follows up on every person who tests positive for COVID-19.

Health and safety plans include multiple effective measures to help prevent COVID-19 from spreading at school. Even when there may be exposures, it does not mean COVID-19 is spreading in school. But, sometimes COVID-19 does spread despite the safety measures.

A **cluster** is when several people test positive for COVID-19 in a school within a two-week period. In this case, public health thinks people were infected at school. To stop the spread, public health asks close contacts to self-isolate. Public health will work with the school to see if changes to health and safety plans are needed.

An **outbreak** is the same as a cluster, except that significant actions are needed to stop COVID-19 from spreading in the school. Public health may close the school for a period of time or take other extraordinary measures.

Information on COVID-19

Go to bccdc.ca for information on COVID-19.

Go to your [school district's](#) website or contact them for local health and safety plans.

Updated: February 4, 2021