GET THE FACTS: BACK TO CLASS FOR 2020-21

## Returning to daily in-class learning at schools

The decision to allow in-school learning with public health measures in place weighs the risks of prolonged school closures on students' educational experience and overall wellbeing against the risk of COVID-19 outbreaks.

The experience of other countries indicated that closing schools was not a significant factor in limiting community spread of COVID-19. Health officials in Alberta closely watched the situation in other provinces and countries who returned to school earlier to evaluate the most effective public health measures at schools.

Public health measures

The public health measures include students and staff members staying home when sick, frequent hand washing and/or hand sanitizing before and after entering the school and classrooms, increased cleaning of surfaces at schools and on buses, avoiding sharing personal items, maintaining a physical distance of 2 metres from others when possible and keeping students in cohorts (groups).

Parents, students and staff are expected to complete the daily screening checklist on a daily basis prior to entering the school. Visitors should also use the self-screening questionnaire to determine whether they may enter the school.
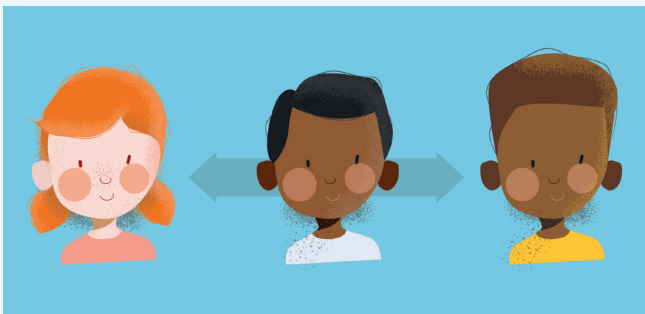
Handling situations when students cannot keep 2 metres away from others

If physical distancing is not possible, it is strongly recommended to put extra emphasis on hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and cleaning and disinfecting on a regular basis before and after activities.

In a classroom, if desks cannot be kept 2 metres apart, students should be seated so they are not facing each other, such as arranging desks in rows. This way, students are not likely to cough directly on the face of another student.

In addition to physical distancing, arranging groups into cohorts can reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission by limiting contact and potential exposure to a small group instead of the whole school.

Safety for students or staff with underlying medical conditions

For students with underlying medical conditions or risk factors, parents should consult their child's physician to consider the health risks and make a decision that will best support the child. Contact your child's school to discuss available options and support. School staff should also consult a physician and discuss available options and support with their school board.

For more details: alberta.ca/returntoschool

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Wearing masks at school

Students and staff may choose to wear a face mask to protect one another. If students or staff choose to wear face masks, care should be taken to ensure the mask is used correctly and safely. Practices such as physical distancing, cohorting, hand washing, staying home when sick and increased cleaning of surfaces continue to be the priority public health measures.

If a student shows symptoms at school

Parents will be asked to pick up the child from school immediately. The student will be asked to wear a non-medical mask if able to do so safely, and be isolated in a separate room or kept at least 2 metres away from others. Parents should ensure the school has their most up-to-date contact information.

If a student has symptoms related to allergies or a pre-existing medical condition

The student should be tested at least once before returning to school and have a negative COVID-19 test result. These symptoms would be their baseline health status. As long as the cough or runny nose is always the same and does not get worse, the student can attend school. Talk to your school about your child's pre-existing medical condition so the school may keep a confidential record of this condition.

How long student/parent/staff members should isolate after having symptoms

You are legally required to isolate for a minimum of 10 days, or until symptoms resolve whichever takes longer, if you have a cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, or sore throat that is not related to a pre-existing health condition or if you test positive for COVID-19.

If you tested negative and have no known exposure to the virus, stay home until your symptoms resolve. If you tested negative and have had an exposure to the virus, you are legally required to quarantine for 14 days from the exposure date.

If there was a COVID-19 case at school

A public health team will investigate the case to find out when the symptoms developed and support the school to minimize the spread. It is likely that only the group of students and staff who came in close contact will be required to stay home for 14 days, and not the whole school. Parents will be notified if a case of COVID-19 is confirmed at school and public health officials will contact those who were in close contact with the case.

Public health measures for school buses

The public health measures for school buses include increased cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces, maintaining a protective zone for the driver, assigning students to seats that are grouped with other household members, and using loading/unloading procedures that support physical distancing of 2 metres between students when possible.

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