

PARENTS' GUIDE 2021–22 SCHOOL YEAR

Information for parents and guardians

What to expect

Alberta has begun a [careful and prudent plan](#) to phase out public health measures, including those in schools.

As of February 14, 2022, provincial health orders will not require early childhood services (ECS) to grade 12 students to be masked to attend school in-person or ride a school bus. Masks will no longer be required for children aged 12 and under.

School authorities cannot require parents, volunteers or other non-school employees to show proof of vaccination. Parents, volunteers and other non-school employees are required to follow all provincial health orders and guidelines that are applicable in schools.

The Restrictions Exemption Program also ended as part of Step 1, along with most associated restrictions. This means that capacity limits will end for sport and performance activities in schools (except for venues that can hold 500 or more people).

Step 2 will remove any remaining provincial school requirements, including the class cohorting requirement, provided hospitalizations are trending downwards.

Step 3 will remove the mandatory isolation requirement.



- Updated guidance is available for schools to use.
- We will continue to work with school authorities on shifts to at home learning if needed.
- Students in grades 4 to 9 and their parents can continue to access free online tutoring through the e-Tutoring Hub on [new.LearnAlberta.ca](#) to catch up on important skills and learning.

Important health measures already in place will continue to protect students in classrooms:

- Mandatory masking for teachers, administrators and bus drivers during Step 1.
- Elementary schools are to continue to implement class cohorting during Step 1.
- Indoor sports, fitness, recreation, and performance activities are permitted in schools.
- Masking is no longer required for students in K–12 during curriculum-related activities or when participating in extracurricular school activities.
- Masking is required for anyone 13 years and older while attending spectator events during Step 1.
- Schools are to continue physical distancing of 2 metres while indoors, wherever possible, in Step 1. This will no longer be required in Step 2.
- Requirements are to follow all public health guidance.

For more details: alberta.ca/returntoschool

What to do if you or your child are sick

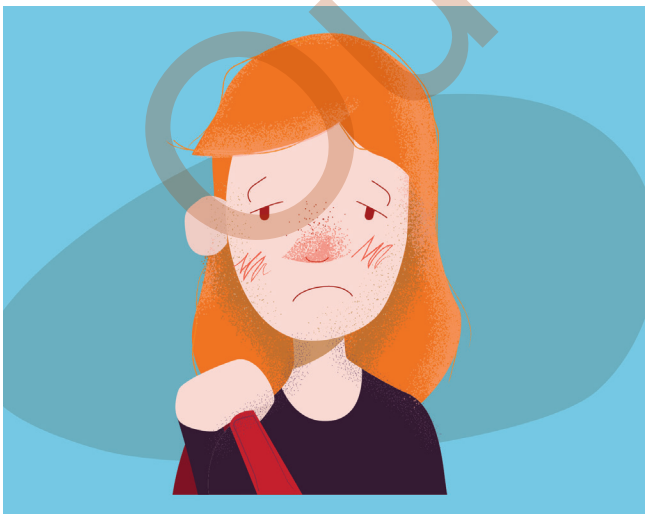
- Core symptoms of COVID-19 are:
- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Sore throat (adults only)
- Runny nose (adults only)

You are required to isolate if you test positive for COVID-19 or if you have core COVID-19 symptoms that are not related to a pre-existing illness or condition.

- **If you are fully immunized¹:** 5 calendar days or until symptoms resolve², whichever is longer, plus 5 calendar days of wearing a mask at all times when around others outside of home (up to 10 calendar days total from when symptoms started or positive test).
- **If you are not fully immunized:** 10 calendar days or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer.
- **If you test negative:** you should still stay home and away from others until symptoms resolve.

¹ A person who has received the complete vaccine series for COVID-19 and it has been 14 days after the second dose in a two dose series or one dose in a one dose series (i.e. Janssen vaccine)

² Symptoms resolved means symptoms have improved and with no fever for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication



Mandatory isolation requirements will be removed in Step 3.

People who are not fully immunized and are household contacts of someone with COVID-19 should also stay home and monitor for symptoms for 10 calendar days. A household contact is a person who lives in the same home as the person with COVID-19, such as parent or sibling. Household contacts also include people who have similar close interactions, such as caregivers or friends sleeping over. Follow best practices to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses.

Returning to school after testing positive (if your child is fully immunized):

Students who are fully immunized against COVID-19 are more likely to have a mild infection or no symptoms at all.

If your child doesn't have any symptoms five calendar days after their test results, or they have clinically improved and been without fever, without the use of medications, for at least 24 hours, they may be able to return to the classroom.

However, they will need to wear a mask of medical-grade quality or higher at all times while in the school setting. This would mean the child could not take meals with others or take part in other activities like sports or singing.

Since this could be challenging for students and the school, your child's school may require students to stay out of school for 10 calendar days, regardless of immunization status, if they have COVID-19. Check with your school to find out what their rules are.



Good public health practices

Washing hands and following the school's rules are important ways to keep each other safe.

It is important to encourage good respiratory etiquette: sneezing into the elbow or a tissue, discarding tissues immediately into a lined bin, and washing hands before touching anything else.

Each day before you take your child to school, ask your child how they are feeling. You should use the [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#) for children under 18.

If your child has new signs of illness or symptoms, the checklist will help you determine how long your child should stay home from school. Refer to the [AHS Online Assessment Tool](#) to help you decide if you should talk to someone about your symptoms, for advice on managing mild symptoms, and whether you need to be tested for COVID-19.

Vaccines work

It is important for Albertans to get vaccinated to protect themselves and others. Vaccines are safe, effective, and they save lives. Every fall, the [annual influenza vaccine](#) is available to everyone aged six months and older.

Everyone ages 5 and older is eligible to get the COVID-19 vaccine. A complete series of the COVID-19 vaccine

has been shown to be highly protective against severe outcomes of COVID-19. You can [book an appointment](#) today for yourself and your child, if they are eligible.

If you want more information on vaccines, please read [why the COVID-19 vaccine is safe](#) and familiarize yourself with [common myths and facts](#).

A school authority cannot deny students access to education due to immunization status.

Protecting children who are not yet eligible for the vaccine

Getting vaccinated is a highly effective way to reduce the risk to those who cannot get the vaccine yet, such as children under age 5.

Staying home when sick, washing hands and covering coughs and sneezes are also essential in reducing the risk of spreading COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses.

Cohorting

A cohort is a small group whose members—always the same people—do not always keep two metres apart. Elementary schools are to continue class cohorting in Step 1. Class cohorting will no longer be required in Step 2.

For more details: alberta.ca/returntoschool

Physical distancing

Schools are to continue physical distancing of 2 metres while indoors, wherever possible, in Step 1. This will no longer be required in Step 2.

Masks

As of February 14, 2022, provincial health orders will not require early childhood services (ECS) to grade 12 students to be masked to attend school in-person or ride a school bus. Masks will no longer be required in any setting for children ages 12 and under.

Masks are mandatory for all adults in schools including teachers, administrators, adult visitors, and bus drivers.

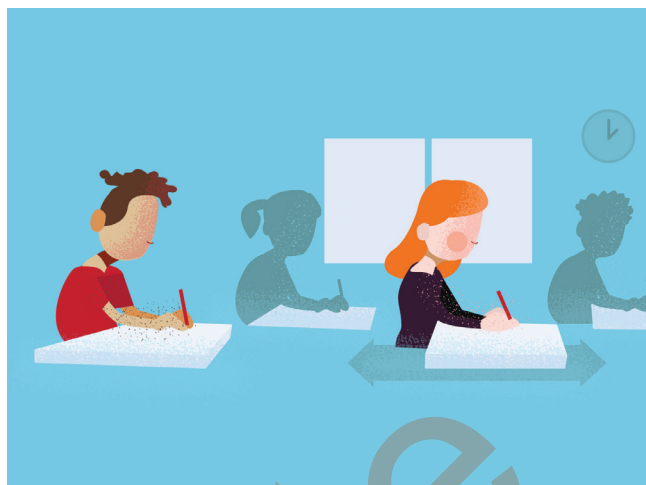
Children and youth can continue to wear masks if they choose to. Schools should support children and youth who choose to wear masks.

Fully immunized students returning after 5 calendar days of isolation and asymptomatic must wear a mask if returning prior to ten days total of isolation.

Spectators at events who are 13 and older would need to wear a mask at a school-based spectator event.

Routine public health measures for schools

Schools should have procedures for regular cleaning and disinfecting of high touch surfaces. This will help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses, gastrointestinal illnesses, and other communicable diseases.



Other things schools can do include:

- Ensuring air circulation (HVAC) systems are working properly
- Opening windows and doors, and encouraging outdoor activities when weather permits
- Routine cleaning procedures, like regularly wiping down high touch areas and disinfecting

If your child or a staff member gets sick at school

If a student or staff member develops symptoms of illness at school, the school will have a plan on what to do. Schools will contact parents if their children show symptoms of illness while at school. This may mean sending the student or staff member home, where possible, and having a separate area for them until they can go home.

If the student does not have a mask, they should be given one if they begin developing new symptoms (like a cough, fever, runny nose or sore throat) while they wait to go home. Parents should make sure the school has their most up-to-date contact information.

Safety for students 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.

For more details: alberta.ca/returntoschool



Shifting to at-home learning

Parents will be notified by the school if the class will shift to at-home learning.

The government will continue to work with school authorities on shifts to at-home learning, if needed. School authorities can decide whether to shift a class or an individual grade to short-term at-home learning if they need to (for example, if a lot of teachers or students are at home because they are sick).

Decisions on shifting entire schools or school authorities to at-home learning will continue to be made by the Alberta government, with input from school authorities.

Online tutoring services for grades 4 to 9

The e-Tutoring Hub will help students catch up on important skills and learning they may have fallen behind on due to the pandemic. It launched on new.LearnAlberta.ca on January 11, 2022 with free, pre-recorded video tutoring sessions for students in grades 4 to 9 to strengthen their literacy and numeracy skills.

Later in the year, the free online tutoring resources will be expanded to cover more grades and subjects, including

live tutoring. Feedback from school authorities, parents and students will be used to help inform the topics for new tutoring sessions.

Taking care of our mental health

Parents are encouraged to talk to their children about how they are feeling, and let them know they are there for them.

If your child needs someone to talk to, they can text CONNECT to the Kids' Help Phone at 686868 or call 1-800-668-6868. This 24/7, free service offers professional counselling, information and referrals. The [Jack.org Alberta COVID-19 Youth Mental Health Resource Hub](#) also has great information for teens on mental health, self-care and supporting others.

If you, as a parent, need someone to talk to, you are encouraged to call the confidential toll-free, 24/7 mental health helpline at 1-877-303-2642. A team that includes nurses, psychologists and social workers attend this line. The AHS website [Help in Tough Times](#) also has helpful information—like the [Text4Hope](#) resource, which you can subscribe to for free by texting COVID19HOPE to 393939. It offers supportive text messages written by mental health therapists.

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