

COVID-19 INFORMATION

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 transmission.

Health officials in Alberta have been, and will continue to, monitor the experiences of other provinces and countries and the impact opening schools has on the community spread of COVID-19. Health officials will also continue to evaluate the public health measures used in other places which returned to school earlier to determine the most effective ways to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Public health measures

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 two metres from others when possible and keeping students in cohorts (groups).

All staff and teachers, as well as students in grades 4–12 are required to wear a mask in all school settings where they may not be able to maintain the recommended physical distancing requirements, such as hallways and shared areas of the school outside the classroom, and on school buses.



Parents, students and staff are expected to complete the daily screening checklist on a daily basis prior to entering the school. Visitors must wear a mask and must also be screened by the school using the [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#) to determine whether they may enter the school.

Handling situations when students cannot keep two metres away from others

All staff and students in grades 4–12 are required to wear masks in common areas where physical distancing cannot be maintained.

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 two 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 of students 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.

For more details: alberta.ca/returntoschool

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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.

Wearing masks at school

Masks are required for staff and teachers in all settings where physical distancing cannot be maintained. Students in grades 4–12 will be required to wear masks in shared areas such as the hallway and on the bus.

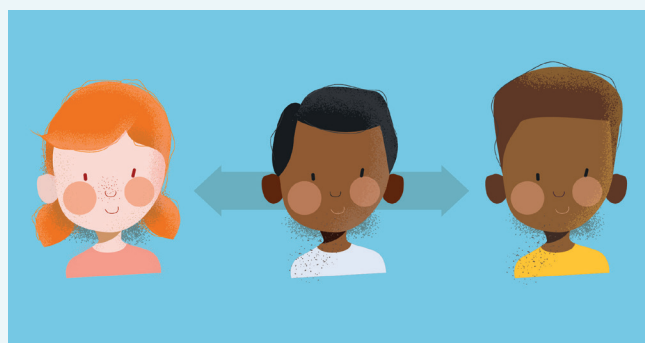
Masks are not required while students are seated in the classroom during instruction if following the physical distancing guidance for school. When activities inside the classroom involves close interactions between students or students and staff, masks should be used for the duration of this activity.

Exemptions will be made for students and staff who are unable to wear a mask due to medical or other needs.

****Your school authority may have additional mask use practices.***

Why masks are not required for students K to grade 3

Mask use for students up to grade 3, is not required or recommended but may be considered. Mask use for younger children is a challenge due to difficulties with



proper fit and compliance. Younger children may not be able to avoid touching their mask, and this could end up increasing the risk of virus transmission than not wearing a mask at all.

Current evidence supports that children under 10 may be less likely than older children or adults to transmit COVID-19. It is recommended that these students instead follow other public health strategies that mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID-19, such as cohorting, covering coughs and hand hygiene to reduce the risk of transmission.

****Your school authority may have additional mask use practices.***

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 two 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.

For more details: [alberta.ca/returntoschool](https://open.alberta.ca/publications/covid-19-information-get-the-facts-back-to-class-for-2020-21)

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How long students/parents/staff members should isolate after having symptoms or had an exposure to the virus

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 test negative and have no known exposure to the virus, stay home until symptoms resolve.

You are legally required to isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms if you are a close contact, or live with, a person who tested positive for COVID-19. If you become sick with cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat during this time, you must isolate for an additional 10 days from the beginning of symptoms or until you are feeling well, whichever takes longer.

If you tested negative and have known exposure to COVID-19, you are legally required to isolate for 14 days from the exposure date.

If there was a COVID-19 case at school

Alberta Health Services (AHS) public health will investigate the case to find out when the symptoms developed, who they were in close contact with while infectious and will work with 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. This will be determined by public health as they do their investigation. Testing will be offered to the close contacts. Parents will be notified if a case of COVID-19 is confirmed at school and AHS public health will contact those who were in close contact with the case.

If there were two or more cases, the school would be considered to have an outbreak. The local medical officers will look at the spread and assess the exposure, whether it is in multiple grades or confined within close contacts of a confirmed case, and provide recommendations. It would only be the people in direct contact with an individual who is a confirmed case who would need to isolate. The contacts of the contacts would not need to isolate.

Public health measures for school buses

The public health measures for school buses include wearing a mask for students grade 4–12 when physical distancing cannot be maintained, increased cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces. In addition to maintaining a protective zone for the driver, assigning students to seats including grouping of household members together, and using loading/unloading procedures that support two metres physical distancing between students when possible.

What about extracurricular activities, field trips and physical education?

Schools should choose activities and sports that support physical distancing. When possible, physical education should be done outside. Equipment that must be shared should be cleaned and disinfected after each use. Field trips and activities requiring group transportation should be postponed. Singing (without a barrier) and playing wind instruments should be postponed at this time, in favour of lower risk alternatives such as percussion or string instruments.

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