



Understanding COVID-19 Symptoms in Child Care Attendees and JK-Grade 12 Students

October 4, 2021

Children and students can present with COVID-19 symptoms for many reasons. While child care centres/schools are not asked to do a full assessment of each COVID-19 symptom an individual may have, they are asked to consider the following to help determine which symptoms may require COVID-19 testing:

Daily COVID-19 Symptom Screening List:

Does the individual have one or more of the following new or worsening symptoms?



Fever > 37.8°C and/or chills



Cough



Difficulty breathing



Loss of taste or smell



Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea

If a child/student has any of the above new or worsening symptoms, not related to other known causes or conditions they already have, they should stay home and arrange to get tested. A child/student who is ill or has multiple symptoms of illness that could be COVID-19 should be tested for COVID-19 or seek assessment from their health care provider.

Consider the following for each symptom:



Fever > 37.8°C and/or chills

Temperature of 37.8 degrees Celsius/100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, and/or experiencing chills.



Cough

Continuous or barking cough that is more than usual, or that makes a whistling noise when breathing. Not related to asthma, post-infectious reactive airways, or other known conditions they already have.



Difficulty breathing (short of breath)

Out of breath, unable to breathe deeply. Not related to asthma or other known respiratory conditions they already have.



Decrease or loss of taste or smell

Not related to seasonal allergies, neurological disorders, or other known conditions they already have.



Nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea

Not related to irritable bowel syndrome, anxiety, menstrual cramps, or other known conditions they already have. A stomach ache on its own is not a COVID-19 symptom.

Full COVID-19 symptom list:

Watch closely for any symptom of COVID-19 and get tested, especially if a close contact of someone who tested positive. The full list of symptoms includes: fever or chills; cough; trouble breathing; decrease or loss of taste or smell; nausea, vomiting or diarrhea; tired, sore muscles or joints; sore throat; runny or stuffy nose, abdominal pain, headache, pink eye; or a decrease or lack of appetite.





What is an alternative diagnosis?

There are many reasons children/students may have symptoms that are not related to COVID-19, including seasonal allergies, asthma, etc. Children/students who have a history of related or known causes of symptoms for conditions they already have can seek an alternative diagnosis from a medical doctor or nurse practitioner. The alternative diagnosis will confirm that they do not have COVID-19, but another condition that explains the child's/student's symptoms.

If the child/student has a chronic health condition and symptoms are getting worse, PCR testing is recommended.



What is not an alternative diagnosis?

- Medical notes only indicating that the child/student has one of the symptoms, but that it is not COVID-19 (e.g. child/student does not have COVID-19, but has diarrhea or a cough).
- Medical notes indicating that symptoms have improved and the child/student can return to school without diagnosing a condition not related to COVID-19 (e.g. child/student had diarrhea, symptoms have improved and they can return to school).
- New colds or respiratory illnesses (flu, bronchitis or pneumonia) that present with similar symptoms to COVID-19 and can make a child/student sick. A child/student who is sick with respiratory symptoms should stay home and get tested for COVID-19 or speak to their health care provider.



Back to Child Care/School Confirmation Form

Parents can complete and submit a [Back to Child Care/School Confirmation Form](#) to the child care or school to confirm that the child is safe to return to school. Toronto Public Health does not recommend the use of medical notes for return to child care or school.



For more information, please review:

[Screening Questionnaire for Children/Students](#)

[COVID-19 Decision Tool for School Students](#)

[Decision Tool for Child Care Attendees](#)

