



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

February 22, 2022

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, the information provided below may be helpful in determining if they are presumed to have COVID-19.

Daily COVID-19 Symptom-based Screening Questions:

A) Does the child/student or anyone in the household have 1 or more of these new or worsening symptoms, today, or in the last 5 or 10 days?



Fever > 37.8°C and/or chills



Cough



Difficulty breathing



Loss of taste or smell

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.

B) Does the child/student or anyone in the household have 2 or more of these new or worsening symptoms today, or in the last 5 or 10 days?



Sore throat



Headache



Feeling very tired



**Runny nose/
Nasal congestion**



**Muscle aches/
joint pain**



**Nausea, vomiting
or diarrhea**



Sore throat or difficulty swallowing

Painful swallowing. Not related to seasonal allergies, acid reflux, or other known causes or conditions you already have.



Headache

Unusual, long-lasting. Not related to tension-type headaches, chronic migraines, or other known causes or conditions you already have. Not related to if the student/child received a COVID-19 and/or flu vaccination in the last 48 hours and is experiencing a mild headache that only began after vaccination.





Extreme tiredness

Unusual, fatigue, lack of energy, poor feeding in infants. Not related to depression, insomnia, thyroid dysfunction, sudden injury, or other known causes or conditions they already have. Not related if they received a COVID-19 and/or flu vaccination in the last 48 hours and are experiencing mild fatigue that only began after vaccination.



Runny or stuffy/congested nose

Not related to seasonal allergies, being outside in cold weather, or other known causes or conditions that the child already has.



Muscle aches or joint pain

Not related to if the student/child received a COVID-19 and/or flu vaccination in the last 48 hours.



Nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea

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

If the child/student or someone in their household has one or more symptoms from A or two or more symptoms from B, not related to other known causes or conditions they already have, the child/student should stay home and isolate immediately. A person who has these symptoms is presumed to have COVID-19 even if not tested and should follow the direction on self-isolation on page 2 of the [COVID-19 self-screening questionnaire](#). They are to seek assessment from their health care provider as needed.

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, they should stay home and speak to a health care provider or seek medical attention.

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 a cough).
- Medical notes indicating that symptoms have improved without the child/student completing the required isolation period and the child/student can return to school without diagnosing a condition not related to COVID-19 (e.g. child/student had a fever, symptoms have improved and they can return to school).



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/Adults](#)



[COVID-19 Decision Tool for Schools and Child Care Centres](#)