

Ministry of Health

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Dear Ontario Parents and Caregivers,

I am reaching out to you to share some important information and reminders to help protect ourselves, our families, and our children against the spread of respiratory infections.

This fall, we are seeing an increase of COVID-19, influenza, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) viruses in Ontario. This is placing a large strain on families and on our healthcare system and it requires us to work together to protect everyone, including the most vulnerable in our communities – the very young, the very old, and those with underlying medical issues.

While these viruses are affecting Ontarians of all ages, young children under five years of age are more likely to experience severe outcomes. We need to make sure that we take all the necessary steps to keep our children safe.

I am calling on all Ontarians, including parents and caregivers, to apply the layers of protection that we know work to keep ourselves and others healthy:

- Stay up to date with your vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines and flu vaccines, which are both safe and effective for individuals 6 months of age and older. Information about flu shots can also be found at [Ontario.ca/flu](https://ontario.ca/flu). Please also make sure your child receives all recommended childhood immunizations, including those that may have been missed during the pandemic. Families should speak with their primary care provider or local public health unit for more information.

- I am strongly recommending that all Ontarians, not just those at high risk, wear a well-fitted mask in all indoor public settings, including schools and child care. Children age two to five should only wear a mask with supervision if they can safely tolerate masking and can put it on and take it off.
- Monitor yourself and your children for respiratory symptoms daily. The provincial [Screening Tool](#) continues to be available to help you with symptom screening, including symptoms of COVID-19 and other illnesses.
- Stay home if you are sick, and keep your children home if they are sick.
- Wash your hands frequently and clean high-touch surfaces regularly, which is especially important for flu viruses and RSV.

If your child does become sick, in most cases, you can take care of your child with RSV, influenza, or other respiratory infections at home. The following resource from the Ontario College of Family Physicians provides helpful tips and information to support you in caring for children with respiratory symptoms:

https://www.ontariofamilyphysicians.ca/files/ocfp_actionsparentscantake.pdf

If you have questions about your child's health, you can call 811 or your primary care provider. Clinical assessment centres are also able to assess children. Some infants and children can develop severe illness and may need to visit their health care provider or go to the emergency department.

Applying all these layers of protection will help to protect ourselves, our families, and our children. I know that it has been a challenging past few years for families, and your ongoing efforts to protect our communities are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



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Chief Medical Officer of Health and Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Health