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October 26, 2023

Re: Reduce the Spread of Respiratory Viruses

Dear Parents or Guardian,

You and your child play an important part in protecting our school communities to reduce the spread of respiratory viruses this fall and winter:

Reduce virus spread

- Stay home if sick or have symptoms of being sick, even if they are mild.
- Use the [TPH screening questionnaire](#) or the provincial [COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) before attending school or work if there are symptoms of illness.
- [Clean hands](#) often.
- [Cover their cough](#) or sneeze with a tissue or their elbow.
- Wear a well-fitted, high-quality [mask](#) in crowded indoor settings with poor ventilation, especially if at higher risk of getting very sick

Get the updated COVID-19 and flu vaccine this fall

- Both vaccines are important to prevent serious illness.
- The updated COVID-19 vaccine targets the XBB variant and will better protect from the variants spreading now and [long-COVID](#).
- Everyone six months and older can get the updated [COVID-19 vaccine](#) and [flu vaccine](#) starting October 30th, 2023 at:
 - Toronto Public Health [fixed-site vaccination clinics](#). Book an appointment at [TPHbookings.ca](#). Only one appointment is needed to get both vaccines.
 - Participating [pharmacies](#) or health care provider's office.

It is also important to have your child up-to-date with routine vaccinations

- In Ontario, the [Immunization of School Pupil Act \(ISPA\)](#) requires all students to be up-to-date with certain vaccines, or have a [valid exemption](#). This includes vaccinations for measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, tetanus, polio, pertussis, meningococcal and chickenpox.
 - Toronto Public Health (TPH) will be sending letters to some parents to ensure their child is compliant with the ISPA legislation.
 - Parents must report any vaccines not given by TPH through [Immunization Connect \(ICON\)](#).
 - Students who are not up-to-date can be suspended from school.

- Students in grades 7 to 12 can get the hepatitis B, human papillomavirus (HPV) and meningococcal vaccines through the [Student Immunization Program \(SIP\)](#).
 - How to get these free vaccines:
 - **SIP school clinics** will offer hepatitis b, human papillomavirus (HPV) and meningococcal vaccines during school hours to grade 7 and 8 students who attend the school. Visit the [School Immunization Program webpage](#) to see the school clinic schedule.
 - **TPH fixed-site vaccination clinics**. Book an appointment at [TPHbookings.ca](#).
 - **A health care provider's office**. Ask your health care provider to [order these vaccines](#) for free from TPH and report it through [ICON](#).

More Information

Visit toronto.ca/health to learn more about:

- [Respiratory Viruses: Information for Parents & Caregivers](#)
- [Childhood Vaccines – Quick Reference Guide](#)

Questions?

Contact Toronto Health Connection at 416-338-7600 or PublicHealth@toronto.ca.

Sincerely,



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