



September 16, 2021

**Dear York Region Families,**

The start of the school year is always an exciting time for students, families and teachers.

We want to thank you for all your efforts to keep children and schools safe. Your schools and school boards have been working together with York Region Public Health preparing for school re-opening. Even now, as schools re-open for the school year, the progression of the COVID-19 pandemic is changing, and our guidance and practices are changing with it. Thank you for your patience, your cooperation and for your shared commitment to keeping schools as safe places for our children.

Like you, we are hopeful this year looks and feels different from last year with the return of certain school-based activities and events our children have missed out on. Nearly 80% of eligible York Region residents (born in 2009 or earlier) are fully vaccinated, making schools and other activities safer. However, with increased circulation of the Delta variant, your continued support and vigilance is necessary to help keep our schools safe.

### **WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

#### **GET VACCINATED**

The single most important thing you can do to ensure schools are safe and in-person learning can continue uninterrupted is ensuring all eligible people in your household (born in 2009 or earlier) are fully vaccinated with two doses as soon as possible. If all eligible members of your household are vaccinated, it is very unlikely an unvaccinated child would bring COVID-19 from home into the school setting.

In addition to the excellent protection the vaccines provide from illness, hospitalization and death, there are other benefits. Students and family members who are **fully vaccinated** and symptom-free will not have to isolate if they are exposed to a case in school or other activities. Parents and family members who are **not fully vaccinated** will need to isolate if they are exposed and must restrict activities to essential activities only if their child is in a dismissed cohort. Vaccination is accessible and convenient in York Region.

Please visit [york.ca/COVID19Vaccine](https://york.ca/COVID19Vaccine) for a list of clinics near you.

#### **ACTIVELY SCREEN YOUR CHILD(REN) EACH SCHOOL MORNING**

One of the most important ways to keep schools safe is to keep children with symptoms out of school.

This is done by **actively screening** your child(ren) every day before school. As difficult as it can be, please take the time each day to monitor and ask your child(ren) about their symptoms as you complete the [York Region School and Child Care Screening Tool](#).

While the Ontario government has recently shared an updated screening tool with five symptoms, York Region Public Health is moving forward with an enhanced screening tool that adds runny nose, sore throat, muscle aches and extreme tiredness to the list of symptoms that would prevent attendance at school. The enhanced screening tool also has additional measures related to unvaccinated siblings of individuals dismissed as close contacts.

Children with symptoms similar to those of COVID-19 but due to another [medical condition](#) can indicate their family physician has confirmed these symptoms are not due to COVID-19 or a non-COVID-19 viral illnesses such as a respiratory infection, a cold or a gastrointestinal infection (stomach flu).

### **WORKING WITH YOU**

Over the school year, you may receive a notice from York Region Public Health for you to act. This may be because your child has been exposed to COVID-19 or is part of a dismissed cohort. Please carefully read all communication from York Region Public Health and follow the instructions including isolation and/or testing. If you are not sure what action to take or have questions, please call us at 1-800-361-5653.

Thank you again for your continued support and collaboration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karim Kurji". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Dr. Karim Kurji  
Medical Officer of Health  
York Region Public Health