

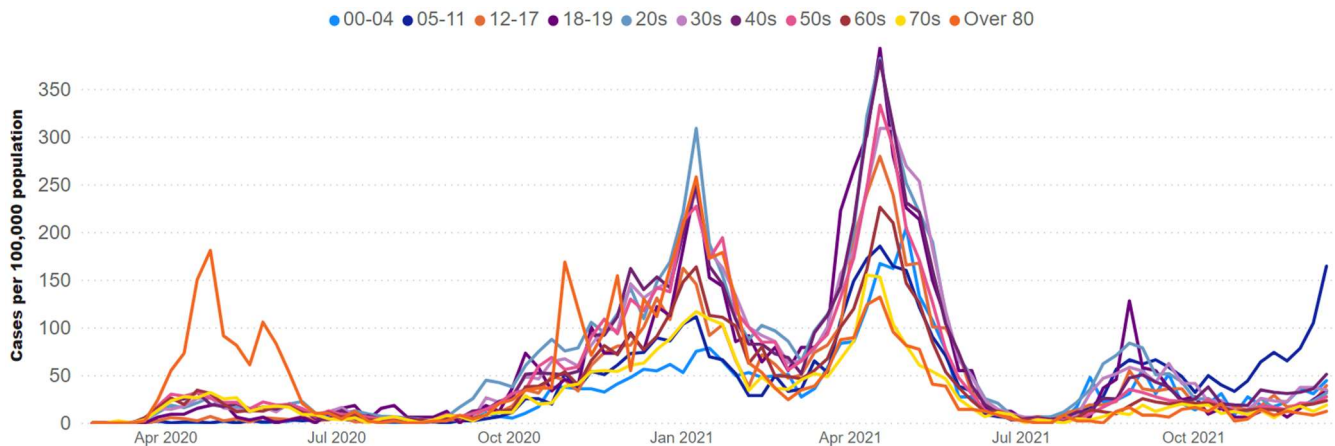


Tuesday, December 14, 2021

Dear York Region Parents, Families and School Communities,

Thanks to the efforts of school administrators, teachers, families and many others, schools have been a safe place for children throughout the pandemic. However, increasing cases in the community particularly amongst our five to 11-year-old population and the Omicron variant have changed the situation very rapidly. The rate of cases among five to 11-year-olds in York Region has increased significantly since October 2021; as of today, it is currently 164 cases per 100,000 population, which is over three times higher than the next highest rate of infection (40-year-olds).

Rate of COVID-19 Cases Over Time by Age Group in York Region



Source: york.ca/COVID19Data

It is critically important that eligible children are vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as possible. Going into January 2022 with as many students vaccinated, even with one dose, will increase the likelihood we can avoid disruptions to in-person learning following the holiday break – something York Region Public Health acknowledges as essential for student achievement and mental health and well-being. As of December 14, 2021, over one third of children five to 11 have been vaccinated and we are aiming for a goal of 50% by December 20, 2021.

Children vaccinated before the holiday break will immediately be eligible to follow our modified sibling dismissal instructions in 2022. The modified sibling dismissal instructions will allow siblings of individuals part of a dismissed cohort to return to school in-person if it has been at least 14 days since their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine. This change minimizes the loss of in-school learning for siblings. Getting first doses as soon as

possible also allows for second doses to be received as quickly as possible, ensuring robust protection against COVID-19 and sustained in-person learning. If trends continue as they are, we expect there will be many more exposures and dismissals in schools, particularly following the upcoming holidays. This will result in significant numbers of children missing in-person learning opportunities. Early vaccination is your best protection from severe COVID-19 outcomes and to preserve in-person learning this year.

There are many opportunities to get vaccinated this week. This weekend there will be a dedicated family-friendly COVID-19 vaccine clinic on December 18 and 19 (visit york.ca/COVID19Vaccine for more information), by appointment only from 9:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. at St. Jean de Brebeuf Catholic High School in the City of Vaughan. This special clinic is your opportunity to get your child a paediatric COVID-19 vaccine while they enjoy some 'Beary' special perks including special guests, music, tropical decorations and beach attire, a beach-themed selfie station, giveaways and more!

CLINIC DETAILS

- The clinic will offer the paediatric Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine; adolescent/adult vaccines will also be available
- Approximately 2,000 appointments will be available each day
- The clinic also offers longer appointment times and added support from trained and caring health care providers to reduce anxiety and vaccine-related fears
- The Beach Day clinic location can be accessed by [public transit](#) and there is ample parking for those arriving by car
- This location offers a fully accessible main floor location with washrooms available
- Translation services will be available onsite
- Attendees are also encouraged to dress in beach wear, bring their favourite teddy bear or stuffed toy and/or other comfort item (e.g. iPad, tablet, handheld toy) to make them feel more comfortable

Finally, all students will have received or will be receiving five rapid antigen tests to use over the holidays. Please use them before any holiday gathering your school-aged child(ren) may be attending to ensure these gatherings remain safe. Also, reserve two of the tests to use on Friday, December 31, 2021 and Sunday, January 2, 2022 to help ensure COVID-19 is not being brought into schools following the holiday break. As a reminder, any positive result on a rapid test must be followed up with a PCR test within 24 hours at a COVID-19 Assessment Centre and individuals must isolate while waiting to get tested and for their results.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership and collaboration in keeping our schools safe and wishing you and your families a restful holiday break.

Sincerely,



Dr. Barry Pakes
Medical Officer of Health
York Region Public Health