

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, January 5, 2022

Positive for COVID-19 – What should you do?

Effective December 31, publicly-funded PCR testing will be available only for high-risk individuals who are symptomatic and/or are at risk of severe illness from COVID-19, including for the purposes of confirming a COVID-19 diagnosis to begin treatment, and workers and residents in the highest risk settings, as well as vulnerable populations.

Members of the general public with mild symptoms are asked not to seek testing. A full list of eligible individuals can be found [here](#).

In addition, most individuals with a positive result from a rapid antigen test will no longer be required or encouraged to get a confirmatory PCR or rapid molecular test.

What you should do:

If you have COVID-19 symptoms you should presume you have the virus. If you are ill or have received a confirmation through testing, you **MUST** isolate to protect others and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19:

- Individuals who are vaccinated, as well as children under 12 who have symptoms of COVID-19 must isolate for **five** days following the onset of symptoms.
- These individuals can end isolation after **five** days if their symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours, and all public health and safety measures, such as masking and physical distancing, are followed.
- Individuals who are unvaccinated, partially vaccinated or immunocompromised **will be required to isolate for 10 days**.
- If you are someone who works or lives in a high risk-health care setting (i.e., hospitals, long-term care, retirement homes, congregate living settings) you must notify your employer. Individuals who work or live in these settings should not attend work for **10 days** from their symptom onset, or from their date of diagnosis. To ensure sufficient staffing levels, workers in these settings may have the opportunity to return to work early on day seven of their isolation, with a negative PCR test, or two negative rapid antigen tests on day six and seven. Speak with your employer or occupational health and safety department for more information.

All household contacts must also isolate for the same duration as the person with symptoms, regardless of their vaccination status.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should also inform anyone you were in contact with in the two days prior to you developing symptoms and provide them with the link to Ontario.ca/exposed. Individuals who are eligible for a lab-based PCR test are encouraged to get tested.

Additional Resources:

- [How Cases and High-Risk Contacts Will Be Notified](#) – video – HKPR District Health Unit
 - [What to Do if You Are a High-Risk Contact](#)
 - [How to Determine if You are a Close Contact](#)
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How to Isolate

- [How to Self-Isolate Fact Sheet](#) – Public Health Ontario

Stay home

- Do not use public transportation, taxis or rideshares.
 - Do not go to work, school or other public places.
 - Stay home unless you need to get tested or require emergency medical care.
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Avoid contact with others

- No visitors unless essential (e.g. care providers)
 - Stay away from seniors and people with chronic medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, lung problems, immune deficiency).
 - As much as possible, stay in a separate room away from other people in your home and use a separate bathroom if you have one.
 - Make sure that shared rooms have good airflow (e.g. open windows).
 - If these steps are not possible, keep a distance of at least two metres (6 feet) from others at all times.
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Keep your distance

- If you are in a room with other people, keep a distance of at least two metres and wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth.
 - Other people should wear a mask when they are in the same room as you.
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Wash your hands

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
 - Dry your hands with a paper towel, or with your own cloth towel that no one else will share.
 - Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
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Cover your coughs and sneezes

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
 - Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hand.
 - Throw used tissues in a lined wastebasket, and wash your hands. Lining the wastebasket with a plastic bag makes waste disposal safer.
 - Clean your hands after emptying the wastebasket.
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Wear a mask over your nose and mouth

- Wear a mask if you must leave your house to see a health care provider or to get tested for COVID-19 (if applicable).
 - Wear a mask when you are within two metres of other people, or stay in a separate room.
 - If you do not have a mask, maintain two metres distance from people and cover your cough and sneezes
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What should I do if I develop symptoms?

- Immediately self-isolate (even if you are fully vaccinated).
 - Use Ontario's online Self-Assessment Tool to see what next steps you should take.
 - **All household contacts must also isolate for the same duration as the person with symptoms, regardless of their vaccination status.**
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After Your Isolation Period is Over

If you do not develop symptoms after your isolation period is over *OR* If you no longer have symptoms:

- You can stop isolating
- You **MUST** wear a mask, physically distance, and continue other COVID-19 prevention measures when in public
- Continue with frequent handwashing and avoid touching your face
- Get vaccinated (including a booster dose)