

## Covid-19 Updates

**Many thanks to Unity Health Toronto for giving us permission to share this letter.**

On Dec 30, 2021 the province announced some significant changes to COVID-19 self-isolation requirements and testing eligibility due to the Omicron surge. High case counts, limited testing capacity and evolving guidance are changing our approach.

Key messages:

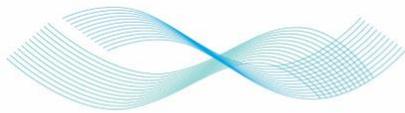
- if you have symptoms, you can presume you have COVID-19
- most people do not need a COVID-19 test to confirm their diagnosis. COVID-19 tests are now being reserved for high-risk settings and high-risk individuals
- there are important changes to isolation guidance that mean some people will only need to isolate for 5 days
- household contacts of people who have symptoms also need to self-isolate
- two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine continue to provide protection against severe disease for those with healthy immune systems. Most people with two COVID-19 vaccines and healthy immune systems will have milder symptoms if they get COVID-19.
- **three** doses of a COVID-19 vaccine provide **more** protection from getting and transmitting the Omicron variant than 2 doses. All Ontarians 18+ are eligible for a 3<sup>rd</sup> dose 84 days after the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose (see [here](#)). Please book a third dose if you have not already done so!

Below is some more detailed information on what to do if you experience COVID-19 symptoms and when to reach out to us.

### 1. How do I know if I have Covid-19?

COVID-19 causes a range of symptoms that vary from person-to-person and include new or worsening:

- Fever > 37.8° C and/or chills
- Cough
- Trouble breathing
- Decrease or loss of smell or taste
- Headache



- Very tired, sore muscles and joints
- Nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Sore throat

The number of people right now with COVID-19 infection is so high that **if you are experiencing any of these symptoms you should assume you have COVID19 infection even if you are fully vaccinated.**

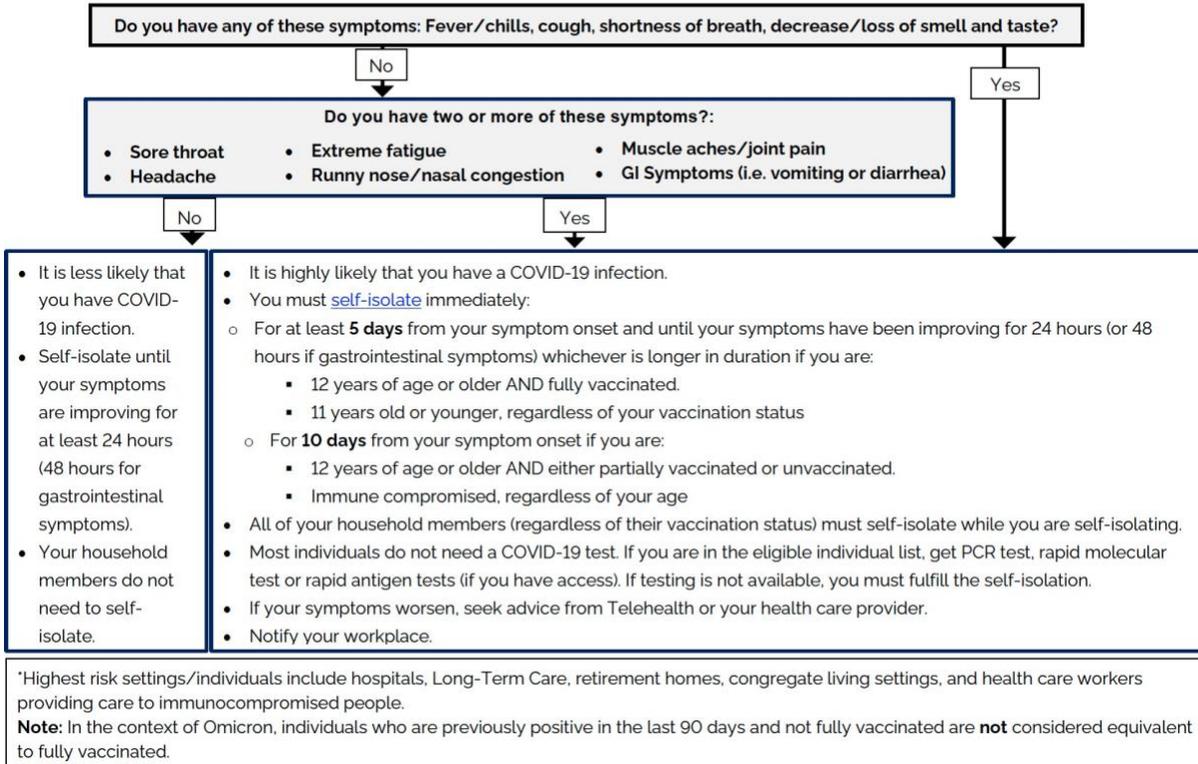
## **2. How long do I need to self-isolate?**

Factors such as your age, your vaccination status, and your health status will determine how long you need to self-isolate. Please note **all household members should also self-isolate** if someone in the home has COVID-19, regardless of whether or not they have symptoms. This chart below provides detailed information on what to do if you have symptoms.



**You have symptoms and are concerned you may have COVID-19. Now what?**

This guidance does not apply to individuals who live, work, volunteer or are admitted in a highest risk setting\*

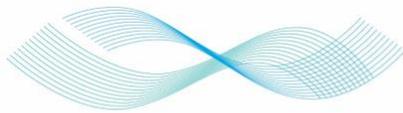


You can also use this on-line [self-assessment](#) for instructions on self-isolation and testing.

### 3. What about COVID-19 testing?

Provincial guidance on who is eligible for a PCR test has changed. **Most people do not need a test to confirm their diagnosis.** Tests are now being reserved for high-risk settings (e.g. people who live or work in congregate settings, long-term care homes, hospitals etc) and high-risk individuals (e.g. those 70 and over, people who are immunocompromised, people who are very ill, people who are underhoused or homeless, Indigenous people).

If you have access to a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT), you can use this to test yourself. However, if you have any of the above symptoms, a negative RAT does



not mean that you do not have COVID. You should still isolate from the start of your symptoms.

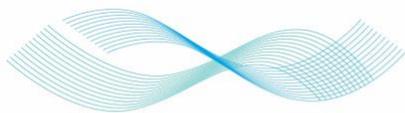
**Please note that we do not have any rapid antigen tests available in our clinics, and we are not scheduling appointments in the clinic for COVID-19 testing.**

#### **4. What should I do if I test positive on a home Rapid Antigen Test (RAT)?**

If you test positive on a RAT, with or without symptoms, you should assume you have COVID-19 and self-isolate. A positive RAT at this time does not need to be confirmed with a PCR test, unless you meet the new provincial criteria for testing. Consider taking a picture of the positive RAT (labelled with your name and date) for your records.

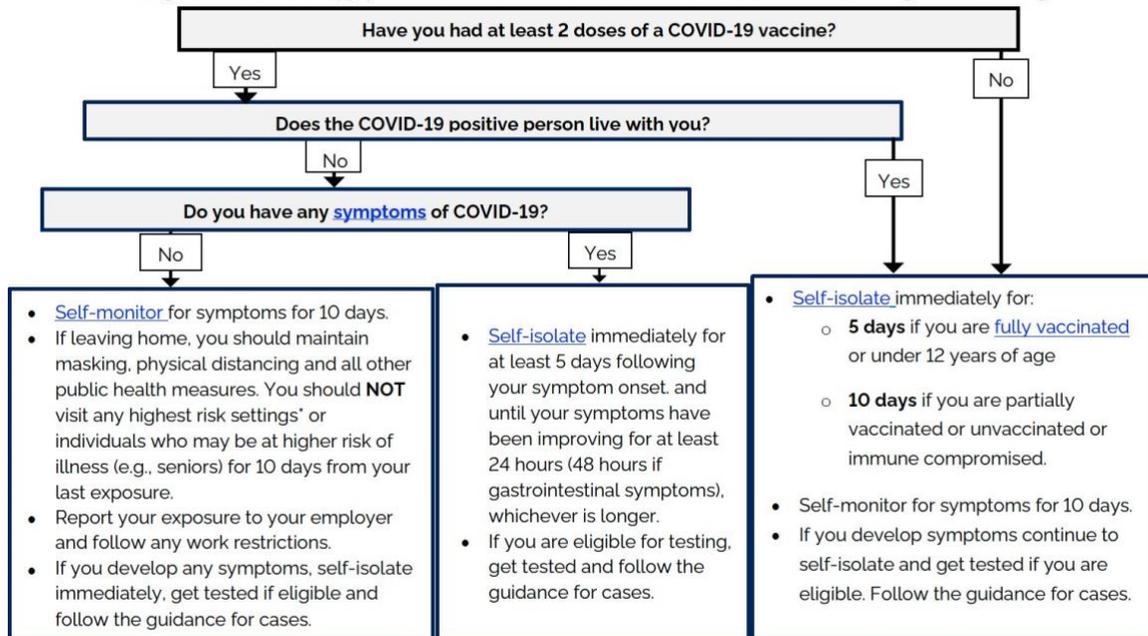
#### **5. What if I have been exposed to someone with COVID-19?**

The chart below can help you decide what to do if you have been exposed to someone has COVID-19 (e.g. because they tested positive on a RAT or PCR test OR because they have symptoms).



**You've been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 on PCR, rapid molecular, or rapid antigen test. Now what?**

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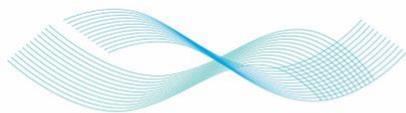


\*Highest risk settings include hospitals, Long-Term Care, retirement homes, health care workers providing care to immunocompromised, congregate living settings  
**Note:** In the context of Omicron, individuals who are previously positive in the last 90 days and not fully vaccinated are **not** considered equivalent to fully vaccinated.

**6. Am I eligible for treatment for COVID-19 if I have or get symptoms?**

Most people will recover from COVID-19 using the same remedies available for the common cold and/or influenza, including lots of rest, plenty of fluids and use of over-the-counter medications for sore throats, body aches, headaches and fever. For resources on how to manage symptoms at home, please review [Toronto Public Health's website](#).

Some **higher-risk individuals** with COVID-19 should be considered for early treatment options, in consultation with their health care team. Please call us to discuss potential need for treatment if you have a PCR confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, are **over the age of 70** (50 yrs if First Nations, Inuit or Metis), **AND** have any of the following conditions:



- Obesity (BMI  $\geq$  30)
- Dialysis or stage 5 kidney disease
- Diabetes
- Cerebral Palsy
- Intellectual Disability
- Sickle Cell Disease
- Receiving active cancer treatment
- Solid organ or stem cell transplant recipients

Feeling sick with COVID-19 can also make it difficult to manage pre-existing medical conditions, such as asthma or mood symptoms. Please call us at any time if you need help managing any medical conditions while isolating at home with COVID-19.

### **7. If I have symptoms or test positive for COVID-19 (either PCR test or RAT), when should I call my health care team?**

Tracking your symptoms of COVID-19 can help you and your care team determine whether a clinic or hospital visit is needed. See our [symptom tracker handout](#) to help you identify and track your symptoms.

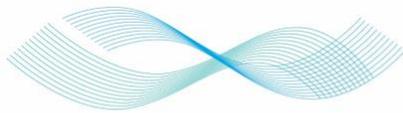
Please call us and specify that your concern is urgent if you:

- Have new or worsening discomfort in your chest
- Have new or worsening trouble breathing
- Have increasing or significant fatigue
- Start feeling better and then get worse again (especially 5-8 days after the start of your symptoms)
- Are feeling lightheaded or dehydrated
- If you have a pulse-oximeter at home and your oxygen level drops by 3% from usual or is below 93% at any time
- If you are having challenges self-isolating because you cannot access food or other essential supports

### **8. When should I seek urgent medical attention?**

Please go to your closest emergency room or dial 911 (or ask a family member/friend to dial 911) if you are experiencing any of the following symptoms:

- Severe chest pain
- Severe shortness of breath



- Continuous vomiting and inability to drink any fluids
- Serious trauma or injuries (i.e., bleeding that won't stop, deep cuts, broken bones)
- Sudden loss of vision
- Sudden onset weakness of the face or arm/leg
- Sudden inability to walk or talk

### **9. I'm worried with everything going on. How can I protect myself?**

We know this is a challenging time for many. Now more than ever, adhering to [public health measures to reduce spread](#) is important. Vaccination continues to provide excellent protection against severe disease. All adults 18+ are eligible to receive a 3<sup>rd</sup> dose 84 days after their 2<sup>nd</sup> dose. Please book the vaccine dose you are eligible for using the [provincial booking system](#).

Take care and be well,  
Your Taddle Creek Family Health Team