

MANAGING SYMPTOMATIC INDIVIDUALS AND INCREASED ABSENTEEISM IN SCHOOLS

Updated on April 6, 2022

Note: The recommendations provided are subject to change based on updates provided by the Ministry or local guidance documents. Please keep yourself updated on all changes by reviewing york.ca/infectionprevention.

Management of Students/Staff who are Symptomatic

- All settings should maintain personal protective equipment (PPE) kit(s) specifically for managing students/attendees or others who become ill
- If a separate room is not available, the symptomatic individual should be physically distanced from others including staff
- The symptomatic individual should be provided with disposable tissues and reminded of hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and proper disposal of tissues
- If the symptomatic individual is a child, a staff member should remain with the child until a parent/guardian arrives
- If tolerated and the individual is older than two years of age, they should be encouraged to wear a medical mask
- Any staff who are caring for a symptomatic individual and/or an unmasked individual should wear appropriate PPE at all times and be trained on proper use of PPE
- After providing direct care to a symptomatic individual, all PPE should be doffed properly, and any disposable PPE should be discarded safely
- Staff must clean and disinfect their own reusable eye protection, where applicable, as it is required to be labelled and dedicated to each staff member (i.e., no sharing permitted)
- Once the individual leaves the setting, all areas accessed by the individual must be properly cleaned and disinfected as soon as reasonably possible. The isolation area/room should not be used again until it has been cleaned in accordance with cleaning and disinfecting practices
- All rooms used by a symptomatic individual should be cleaned and disinfected with a high-level disinfectant*
- All surfaces in isolation area/room must be cleaned and disinfected between use

*A disinfectant with a kill claim against mycobacteria, enveloped and non-enveloped viruses and fungi. The disinfectant must also have a valid Drug Identification Number (DIN).

Proper Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette are Important Strategies to Help Prevent the Spread of Infectious Diseases

All staff, students and visitors should be reminded about the proper handwashing method and the need for increased hand hygiene. The following are additional important reminders:

- Handwashing sinks should be equipped with liquid soap, paper towels and hot and cold running water under pressure
- When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, containing 60 to 90% ethanol or isopropyl alcohol can be used, but younger children must be supervised when using
- Ensure staff and students practice proper respiratory etiquette such as coughing and sneezing with their mask on or into a tissue/sleeve (not their hands) if they are not masked
- Ensure proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette are practiced before and after handling shared items

Managing Increased Absenteeism in Schools

Respiratory and enteric (food and waterborne) illnesses may result in periods of increased absenteeism. Schools should remain diligent to prevent the spread of infectious diseases and implement enhanced infection prevention and control (IPAC) measures.

- Minimize the sharing of materials that cannot be cleaned or disinfected; where possible, dedicate the items to each student
- Clean and disinfect using a high-level disinfectant on all high-touch surfaces and affected areas (e.g., used by symptomatic individuals) at least twice daily, or more often as needed

Relevant Resources and Guidance Documents

York Region Guidance/Resources:

- [PPE Donning and Doffing \(Putting on and taking off\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfection in Schools](#)
- [York Region's Cleaning and Disinfecting Chart](#)
- Hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and PPE posters are available on york.ca/infectionprevention