

# COVID-19 AND CHILDREN

## BACKGROUND

COVID-19 is a viral illness caused by a coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2 and is spread through respiratory droplets when in [close contact](#) with someone who is infected. This virus can often cause a mild illness, with [symptoms](#) similar to that of the common cold. It can also cause more severe illness, with symptoms such as pneumonia (infection of the lungs). Older adults and those who have chronic medical conditions are more susceptible to severe illness. COVID-19 tends to cause milder illness in children. Most people who become ill with a coronavirus recover at home without need for medical care. No antiviral medications are available yet for the treatment of COVID-19 and a vaccine has not yet been developed.

## SYMPTOMS IN CHILDREN

While many children are asymptomatic or only have mild illness, watch for any of the following symptoms of COVID-19.



**FEVER AND/OR CHILLS**  
(temperature of 37.8°C or greater)



**NEW OR WORSENING COUGH**



**SHORTNESS OF BREATH**



**DECREASE OR LOSS OF SMELL OR TASTE**

### IF "YES":

- Your child should stay home to isolate
- Contact your child's health care provider for further advice or assessment, including if your child needs a COVID-19 test or other treatment



**SORE THROAT OR DIFFICULTY SWALLOWING**



**RUNNY NOSE, OR NASAL CONGESTION**  
(unrelated to seasonal allergies or returning inside from the cold)



**HEADACHE**



**NAUSEA/VOMITING AND/OR DIARRHEA,**



**FATIGUE, LETHARGY, MUSCLE ACHES AND/OR MALAISE**

### IF "YES" TO 1 SYMPTOM:

- Your child should stay home for 24 hours from when the symptom started
- Your child may return to school/child care if symptom is improving and they feel well enough (no test is needed)
- If the symptom persists or worsens, contact your child's health care provider for further advice or assessment, including if your child needs a COVID-19 test or other treatment

### IF "YES" TO 2 OR MORE SYMPTOMS:

- Your child should stay home to isolate
- Contact your child's health care provider for further advice or assessment, including if your child needs a COVID-19 test or other treatment

For more information, visit [york.ca/covid19](http://york.ca/covid19)

## Other Symptoms of COVID-19 can include:

- Exacerbation of chronic conditions (worsening)
- Chills
- Croup
- Pink eye
- Red/purple discolouration to hands, fingers, feet and/or toes, and skin may peel (COVID-toes)
- Difficulty feeding in infants

## INFLAMMATORY ILLNESS AND CHILDREN

There is a rare, but serious inflammatory illness that has occurred in a small number of children globally, which is thought to be associated with COVID-19, and includes symptoms suggestive of an illness called Kawasaki disease. This illness usually occurs weeks after COVID-19 infection. Researchers believe that symptoms may be a delayed immune response to the virus. No Kawasaki-like disease has been reported in York Region. The occurrence of this inflammatory disease is being monitored closely.

- Some children develop symptoms such as persistent fever, severe stomach pain and gastrointestinal symptoms, including nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and a rash, pink eye, and red/purple discolouration to hands, fingers, feet and/or toes, and skin may peel (COVID-toes)
- If you think your child has any of these symptoms, make sure to seek advice from a health care provider, including your child's doctor, [Telehealth Ontario](#), or go to the emergency room
- You should take your child to the hospital right away if they have any of the following symptoms:
  - » Fast breathing or trouble breathing
  - » Bluish skin colour
  - » Not drinking enough fluids
  - » Not waking up or not interacting
  - » Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held

## HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR CHILD

COVID-19 spreads mainly from person-to-person through respiratory droplets when in close contact with someone who is infected. Based on current evidence, children do not appear to be at higher risk for COVID-19 than adults. There is no vaccine available yet to protect against COVID-19.

### Ways you and your child can help decrease the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash their hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Sneeze and cough into their sleeve
- Avoid touching their face, eyes, nose or mouth
- Practice physical distancing (by staying 2-metres or 6-feet apart from people outside your family)
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
- Avoid contact with people who are sick
- Stay home if you or your child are sick
- Wear a two layer, non-medical, cloth mask or face covering when physical distancing is not possible. When using a non-medical mask/face covering, always remember:
  - » Medical masks should be left for health care providers
  - » Do not share your mask/face covering with other people
  - » Masks/face coverings should not be put on children under the age of two
  - » People who have trouble breathing should not wear a face covering
- Online instructions can show you how to make your face coverings at home. In addition, many online and in-store retailers offer cloth masks for sale at reasonable prices.



# HOW TO SPEAK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT COVID-19



- It is important to take an honest approach when speaking to your child in order to ensure they have accurate information about the pandemic
- Use language that is age-appropriate
- Let your child know that many healthcare practitioners and scientific experts are working hard to keep us all safe and healthy
- Validate your child's concerns and feelings by letting your child know that you understand that they miss their friends or that they are feeling scared. You can let them know you will be there for them whenever they need you or when they have questions or concerns
- Some children may regress with certain skills. For example, a child may start asking for help with getting dressed or a younger child may have more tantrums or may show aggression. You can respond in a caring manner, and you can distract and redirect
- Limit exposure to news and media as this can increase anxiety for both children and parents, and when tuning into news, choose a reliable news source
- Find creative ways to keep in touch with family and friends, and maintain daily routines
- It is important for parents and caregivers to role model healthy coping skills, and self-care. You can do this by ensuring you get adequate sleep, eat a nutritious diet based on [Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating](#), and exercise daily
- If you or your child are having challenges coping during this time, reach out to your physician, [Family Services of York Region](#), the [Canadian Mental Health Association](#) or [Kids Help Phone](#) for support

## IMMUNIZATIONS DURING COVID-19

Although there currently is no vaccine that protects against COVID-19, it is still important to ensure your children are protected from other vaccine-preventable diseases. While vaccines provided through schools may be delayed with school closures, it is still important that you talk to your health care provider about staying up-to-date on other routine vaccines for infants and children.

- Routine vaccines: infants and children
  - » 2, 4, and 6 month vaccines (pertussis, tetanus, diphtheria, Hib, polio, pneumococcal and rotavirus)
  - » 12 and 15 month vaccines (meningococcal, pneumococcal, measles, mumps, rubella and varicella)
  - » 18 month vaccines (pertussis, tetanus, diphtheria, Hib, polio)
- Routine vaccines: adolescents and adults
  - » Boosters and catch-up vaccines can be given if you are seeing your healthcare provider for other urgent issues
- Seasonal influenza vaccines when available (fall 2020)



## REFERENCES

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