



March 25, 2021

Dear Parents, Guardians, Students, and Staff,

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) has been closely monitoring COVID-19 cases infected with a variant of concern (VOC) in Ottawa and its transmission in schools. Out of an abundance of precaution with initial VOC cases in the school setting, OPH required more extensive testing of high-risk contacts. To date, we have found no significant increase in transmission within the school setting after someone tests positive for a VOC, compared to a non-VOC.

What does this mean?

Based on these findings, effective March 24, 2021, OPH will **no longer require** that high-risk contacts of a VOC COVID-19 case receive a negative COVID-19 test result before returning to school at the end of the 14-day isolation period. Please note that *testing is still strongly recommended for all high-risk contacts of both VOC and non-VOC cases.*

OPH will also **no longer require** high-risk contacts of a VOC who have not been tested to stay home in self-isolation for an additional 10 days after finishing their 14-day isolation period.

High-risk contacts of a VOC are thereby advised to follow the same recommendations as high-risk contacts of an individual who has tested positive for a non-VOC COVID-19:

- Self-isolate for 14 days after last day of exposure to an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19;
- Get tested on or after day 7 following last day of exposure to an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19;
- Get tested immediately if the high-risk contact has any symptom(s).

If you or your child have been identified as a high-risk contact of a VOC prior to March 24, 2021 please note the following:

- OPH will no longer track and verify that high-risk contacts receive a negative test result;
- High-risk contacts of a VOC can return to school once they have completed their 14-day isolation period, even if they do not have a confirmed negative test result.

We thank you for your ongoing support in reducing the transmission of COVID-19 in schools in our community. Ottawa Public Health will continue to monitor the evolving evidence about the virus and VOCs and provide you with information every step of the way.

Contact Us: Please visit [OPH's High Risk Contact webpage](#) for more details. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Ottawa Public Health at 613-580-6744 Monday to Friday from 9 am and 4 pm.