



Halton Region Public Health
1151 Bronte Road
Oakville ON L6M 3L1

December 20, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians of children in child care,

There has been a significant increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in the past three weeks in Halton. The new COVID-19 variant (Omicron) is spreading at a rate not seen since the pandemic began. The speed of Omicron transmission means we must approach the coming weeks with caution.

The safest way to connect with family and friends over the holidays is to meet virtually. If you have unvaccinated members in your households (i.e. children), be extra vigilant and avoid all gatherings. If you decide to gather in person, it is important to keep your gatherings as small as possible. Follow public health measures when gathering, including wearing a tight-fitting mask, maintaining physical distance of 2 metres, practicing good hand hygiene, and staying home when sick (even when symptoms are mild) to limit the spread of COVID into your home and into the daycare setting.

Health Canada has not yet approved a COVID-19 vaccine for children under 4 years of age. We appreciate that this wait for a vaccine has been difficult for families with young children. Clinical trials in younger children are currently underway, and I am hopeful more information will be available to share in early 2022.

If you have child(ren) aged 5 to 11 (or turning five in 2021), get them vaccinated over the holidays. Appointments are available over the holiday break. Please book an appointment at Halton's child-friendly paediatric clinics to guarantee a vaccine appointment. Beginning December 21, 2021 appointments will be available to be booked for January and February appointments – this includes second doses at the eight week interval. Children can also get vaccinated at a participating pharmacy or physician's office. For the latest information on the paediatric vaccine and frequently asked questions, please visit halton.ca/COVIDvaccines4kids.

If your child develops symptoms of COVID-19, it is important to remember they must stay home and not attend child care. They will have to isolate for 10 days or will need clearance from a physician for their illness or a negative [PCR](#) test to rule out COVID-19 before returning to child care.

If your child had symptoms of a respiratory illness, in order to return to child care, they must meet all of the following criteria:

- They must pass the [COVID-19 school and child care screening](#)
- They do not have a fever (without using medication)
- At least 24 hours have passed since their symptoms started improving (or 48 hours if they have nausea/vomiting/diarrhea)

Regional Municipality of Halton

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- They meet the child care centre or program-specific policies and procedures to manage childhood illnesses

There are several [COVID-19 testing locations in Halton](#). Some of the testing locations offer less invasive PCR testing to support a positive testing experience for young children. Please book an appointment for the test before you go to the testing center.

The Government of Canada is currently advising against all non-essential travel outside Canada. At this time, in addition to required testing, if an unvaccinated or partially vaccinated child under 12 years of age travelled internationally (including USA) they [cannot attend school or child care for 14 days upon arrival to Canada](#). If you are travelling, it is important you are aware of all [rules and regulations](#) as travel guidance frequently changes.

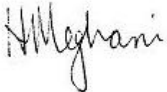
Finally, as we enter this winter holiday season, our collective efforts will be critical in keeping our community safe. Please Remember:

- Now is the time for all eligible family members [to get vaccinated](#). Get your first or second dose if you haven't already or your third dose/booster if you are eligible.
- Protect yourself and others by staying home if you have symptoms, even if they are mild,
- Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT) are an added layer of protection. If used, these tests are more accurate when repeated (2-3 times per week). It is important to keep in mind that their accuracy is limited and they can miss cases.
- Continue to follow [COVID-19 safety measures](#) recommended by Public Health for guidance on masking, physical distancing and hand washing.

When your child(ren) return to child care after the holiday break, please ensure that you are using the updated [screening tool](#).

Thank you all for doing your part. Wishing you all a safe and healthy holiday season.

Sincerely,



Dr. Hamidah Meghani,
Medical Officer of Health