



# Media Release

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September 18, 2020

## School screening and return to school

The Grey Bruce Health Unit has heard from a variety of stakeholders expressing substantial concerns about stringent application of the current screening questionnaire that may send children for testing when it is not required. This may also needlessly exclude children from school, and result in isolation of household members including parents' inability to go to work. For example, one sneeze should not warrant school exclusion, isolation, nor testing.

A new provincial screening tool addresses this issue. The new interactive COVID-19 screening tool for students, parents and teachers is available at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/school-screening/>. The tool will assist to determine if a child should be staying home or attending school. The new provincial screening tool is a step forward from the screening questionnaire used to date by the schools. It is in part in response to the backlog of requests for tests at Assessment Centres. We believe this is an improvement over the previous questionnaire.

Also, the current provincial guidance document requires a symptomatic student and their asymptomatic (no symptoms) household members to self-isolate for 14 days or until they receive a negative COVID-19 test result. The new version of the provincial guidance under development proposes a shift to "self monitoring" for these asymptomatic household members. The favourable local epidemiology allows the Grey Bruce Health Unit to safely recommend early adoption starting today, September 18, 2020. Only the symptomatic student is required to self-isolate for 14 days, or until they receive their negative results and are asymptomatic for 24 hours.

In cases of a student or school staff with symptoms that they have had for months or years causing them to fail COVID screening (For example, chronic medical condition such as, migraines, asthma, allergies). Their family doctor with access to a patient's medical history, can play a role in helping them explain their pre-existing conditions to their employer / school including documentations where warranted. Healthcare providers **are NOT expected to certify that an individual does not have COVID**, rather they may certify that their patient's symptoms are consistent with another health condition.

If such clearance for chronic disease from a healthcare provider is not available, a symptomatic student and school staff will only be permitted to return to school if:

They have received a negative COVID test result and has been symptom free for 24 hours AND are able to pass the [Provincial Screening Tool](#).

Or

They have remained in home isolation for 14 days from the onset of symptoms AND are symptom-free for 24 hours before returning to school.

All asymptomatic members of the same household are to self-monitor for 14 days and take appropriate precautions should symptoms appear. Asymptomatic students in the same household may return to school and do not require a COVID-19 test.

Any asymptomatic individual (even if a contact of a symptomatic individual) does not need to be tested, unless directed to do so by Public Health.

“We have identified the backlog of test requests related to school screening and return to school protocols and are working with schools, the local health care providers, and hospital COVID-19 Assessment Centres to address this issue.” says Dr Ian Arra, Grey Bruce Medical Officer of Health. “At the same time we recognize the priority of keeping our children, school staff, and the community safe.”

More information about testing can be found on [Grey Bruce Health Unit website School Information](#)

**For More Information:**

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