



Memo

TO: Child Care and Early Years Providers

FROM: Ottawa Public Health

DATE: April 13, 2022

SUBJECT: Memo to Child Care and Early Years Providers Regarding Increase in Gastrointestinal Illness

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) would like to thank you for your patience and collaboration throughout these ever-changing times. We appreciate your flexibility and feedback as we adapt our processes to reflect the provincial and federal guidelines and regulations as well as to monitor our local context in Ottawa. We also appreciate your ongoing efforts to follow the [provincial COVID-19 health and safety measures for child care](#).

Ottawa is now experiencing another COVID-19 resurgence and is also seeing an increasing number of gastrointestinal illnesses amongst individuals of all ages in various settings. Although gastrointestinal symptoms (e.g., nausea, vomiting, diarrhea) can be an indication of COVID-19 infections, without proper lab testing, it is difficult to determine if an outbreak in a facility is caused by COVID-19 or other viruses, or by a bacterial infection such as from contaminated food. As such, OPH is requesting that both rapid antigen tests are performed, and stool specimens are collected when a sudden or unusual increase in gastrointestinal symptoms is reported. The results of these tests will help us to ensure that proper control measures and [isolation requirements](#) are implemented to reduce the transmission of gastrointestinal illnesses and/or COVID-19. Note that children and staff with symptoms of gastroenteritis must be free of vomiting or diarrhea for at least 48 hours before returning to school and/or child care in addition to the self-isolation period specified in the screening tool.

Please note that providing these stool sample kits to symptomatic individuals is time-sensitive and very important in identifying the cause of illness. Verbal or written consent from a parent or legal guardian is required to collect and submit these specimens to OPH, or sample collection kits can be provided to parents. Please call the IPAC reporting line for pick-up of completed samples at 613-580-6744 x26325.

In addition to testing, OPH continues to strongly recommend [screening](#) of all individuals entering your facilities and encouraging individuals to wear a [mask](#) when indoors.

For more information, please visit the OPH webpage:

- [How to collect stool specimens](#)
- [COVID-19 testing and care information](#)

We thank you once again for your hard work, commitment and dedication to maintaining health and safety in child care and early years settings.

Sincerely,

Ottawa Public Health