Subject: COVID-19 High-Risk Exposure

Dear Client,

You have had a high-risk exposure to an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19. This means you are a high-risk contact, and you may need to self-isolate from the day of your last contact with this individual. Please be aware that you will not receive a call from Ottawa Public Health.

This letter is issued by Ottawa Public Health to a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 to share with their high-risk contacts. In general, Ottawa Public Health does not dismiss cohorts in group settings, and as such, this letter is not used for this purpose.

Who is a high-risk contact?

A **high-risk contact** is someone who was in close contact with a person who had symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19 during the time they could transmit the virus to others (period of communicability). A person’s period of communicability is **48 hours before their first symptom started, or 48 hours before their test date (if they have no symptoms) until their self-isolation period has ended.**

**Close contact** is being within two meters (six feet) of a person who had symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19 for more than a brief encounter or having multiple close encounters, without adequate protection. Other examples of high-risk situations include:

- Physical contact such as shaking someone’s hand, hugging, kissing, being sneezed or coughed on
- Living in the same household (this excludes individuals who live in a completely separate unit such as a self-contained basement apartment)
- Providing care to someone (e.g., taking care of an elderly parent).

Do I Need to Isolate?

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and do not meet the criteria for PCR testing, and/or if you have had a **positive rapid antigen test**, please follow the guidelines for an individual with symptoms of COVID-19. You must self-isolate for 5 to 20 days (depending on your age and vaccination status) from the day your symptoms started and tell your household members they may be required to self-isolate. More information can be found on [OttawaPublicHealth.ca/COVID19Instructions](http://OttawaPublicHealth.ca/COVID19Instructions).

**Isolation Period for Non-Household Contacts of People Who Have Symptoms or Test Positive for COVID-19 on a PCR Test or Rapid**
**Antigen Test (RAT)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you <strong>do NOT live with</strong> the person who has symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19 on a PCR or RAT AND do not live in a highest risk setting**</th>
<th>You are not required to self-isolate. If you develop symptoms, self-isolate immediately. For a total of 10 days after the last contact with the person who has symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19 (on a PCR or RAT), you must:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Self-monitor for symptoms and self-isolate if you develop any symptom of COVID-19</td>
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</table>
|  | • Continue to wear a well-fitted mask in all public settings  
  o Wear a mask as much as possible in public settings (including school and child care, unless under 2 years old). Exceptions would include removing the mask temporarily for essential activities like eating (e.g., when eating in shared space at school/work while maintaining as much distance from others as possible).  
  o Participation in activities where a mask is worn may be resumed, but you should avoid activities where removing the mask would be necessary (e.g., dining out, playing a wind instrument, high contact sports where masks cannot be safely worn).  
  o People who are exempt from masking (e.g., children under two years of age, etc.) may return to public settings without wearing a mask. |
|  | • Not visit anyone who is immunocompromised or at higher risk of illness (i.e., seniors). |
|  | • Not visit or attend work in any **highest risk settings**. |
|  | • Employees working in **highest risk settings** should report their exposure and follow their workplace guidance. |

| If you **live in a highest risk setting**** | You **must self-isolate for 10 days** regardless of your vaccination status. |

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Last updated: May 18, 2022
If you have previously tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days on a RAT or molecular test (i.e., PCR) only

- You are not required to self-isolate and can attend **highest-risk settings**, as long as you don't have any symptoms. You must self-monitor for symptoms for 10 days following your contact with the person who tested positive or has symptoms.
- If you develop symptoms self-isolate immediately.

**Isolation Period for Household Members of People Who Have Symptoms or Test Positive for COVID-19 on a PCR Test or Rapid Antigen Test (RAT)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you live with the person who has symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19 on a PCR or RAT And are:</th>
<th>If you develop symptoms, self-isolate immediately.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 18 years of age and older AND have already received the <strong>booster dose</strong> OR • Under 18 years of age AND are fully vaccinated*</td>
<td>You are not required to self-isolate, as long as you do not have symptoms. Please follow the <strong>Precautions for Household Members</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| If you live with the person who has symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19 on a PCR or RAT And Have **previously tested positive** for COVID-19 in the last 90 days (based on positive PCR or RAT). | You must self-isolate for the same amount of time as the person who has symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19 on a PCR or RAT. |

| If you live with the person who has symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19 on a PCR or RAT And Do not meet any of the exceptions above | You are not required to self-isolate and can attend highest risk settings, as long as you do not have symptoms. Please follow the **Precautions for Household Members**. |

If another household member develops COVID-19 symptoms, you should extend your self-isolation until the last person with symptoms, or a positive result has

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Last updated: May 18, 2022
finished their self-isolation period (the initial person with symptoms or a positive COVID-19 test result [on a PCR or RAT] does not have to extend their self-isolation period).

Please follow the **Precautions for Household Members.**

**Precautions for Household Members:**

If self-isolation is complete in less than 10 days, or if self-isolation is not required, for a total of 10 days after the **last exposure** to the person who has symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19, **ALL** household members must:

- Self-monitor for symptoms and self-isolate if they develop any symptom of COVID-19.
- Continue to wear a well-fitted mask in all public settings.
  - Wear a mask as much as possible in public settings (including school and child care, unless under 2 years old). Exceptions would include removing the mask temporarily for essential activities like eating (e.g., when eating in shared space at school/work while maintaining as much distance from others as possible).
  - Participation in activities where a mask is worn may be resumed, but you should avoid activities where removing the mask would be necessary (e.g., dining out, playing a wind instrument, high contact sports where masks cannot be safely worn).
  - People who are exempt from masking (e.g., children under two years of age, etc.) may return to public settings without wearing a mask.
- Not visit anyone who is immunocompromised or at higher risk of illness (i.e., seniors).
- Not visit or attend work in any **highest risk settings** (unless previously positive in the past 90 days).
- Employees working in **highest risk settings** should report their exposure and follow their workplace guidance.

“**Last exposure**” refers to the last day the household member was exposed to the person who is isolating with COVID-19 symptoms, or a positive COVID-19 test result:

- If unable to effectively self-isolate in the home, household members would have ongoing exposure until the end of the isolation period of the person who has symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19.
- If there is ongoing exposure, the last day of exposure to the person who has symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19 is the last day of the isolation period of the person who has symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19.
- For example, if a child with COVID-19 was self-isolating from Monday to Saturday, the ‘last exposure’ for the parent who was caring for the COVID-19 positive child would be Saturday.
*Fully vaccinated* means that it has been **at least 14 days since** you received:

- The full series of a COVID-19 vaccine authorized by Health Canada (e.g., 2 doses of Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech, AstraZeneca/COVIDSHIELD, Novavax or Medicago OR 1 dose of Janssen [Johnson & Johnson]) or any combination of such vaccines, or
- One or two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health Canada (e.g., Sinopharm) followed by one dose of a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine authorized by Health Canada (e.g., Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna) or
- Three doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health Canada (e.g., Abdala).

**Highest risk settings** include:

- Hospitals*, including complex continuing care facilities.
- Congregate living settings, including, Long-Term Care, retirement homes, First Nation elder care lodges, group homes, shelters, hospices, correctional institutions and hospital schools.
- Workplace and living settings for international agricultural workers.

*Health care settings to be considered are locations where a high number of patients are immunocompromised (e.g., dialysis clinics, outpatient chemotherapy clinics, transplant clinics). Follow your employer’s guidelines for returning to work. If your employer is not providing guidelines for returning to work, health care workers should assess the risks and benefits of returning to work after 5 days of isolation. Consider if returning to work may result in multiple high-risk individuals (as defined above) being infected due to the small risk of still transmitting the virus.

In general, most community settings would not be considered highest risk (e.g., dental, optometry).

Child-care facilities including schools are not considered ‘highest risk’ unless they are a congregate living setting and/or are associated with a health care environment for immunocompromised or otherwise medically complex individuals (e.g., respite care).

**When can you end your self-isolation?**

If you are required to self-isolate, you must continue isolating for the full isolation period, even if your result is negative and/or you do not have any symptoms **AND/OR** until the person who has symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19 (on a PCR or RAT) has ended their isolation if you live with them.

**Testing**

As molecular testing (PCR and rapid molecular testing) is prioritized for those at increased risk of severe outcomes and those living and working in **highest risk settings****, molecular testing is no longer being recommended for all individuals in the community with symptoms of COVID-19.
Only go for testing if you are eligible. See our testing webpage for testing criteria and testing site hours: OttawaPublicHealth.ca/COVIDtesting.

If you go for PCR testing, you will receive instructions on how to access your results from the Assessment Centre when you get tested. You may also visit the province of Ontario’s website to access COVID-19 test results: https://covid19results.ehealthontario.ca:4443/agree. If you tested positive, the variant of concern result will take a few days to show up.

**What should you do during your self-isolation?**

- Stay at home.
- Have all groceries, medications, and other necessities delivered to your door by a delivery service, friend, or family member. Do not invite them inside your home.
- Postpone all elective medical and dental appointments (this includes vaccination appointments) until your self-isolation period is over.
- Do not take public transportation if you need to go for medical care.
- Take the time to do the indoor things you love, such as reading, painting, watching movies or gaming.
- You may leave your home for outdoor exercise by yourself or with a caregiver. You must maintain physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from others at all times and wear a mask in common areas when leaving if you live in an apartment building, condo, or hotel. **You must not go to outdoor fitness classes or personal training sessions.**

**How do you limit the spread of COVID-19 in your household?**

- If possible, use your own bedroom and bathroom.
- If you share a bathroom, disinfect areas you touch (toilet flush handle, countertop, and taps) after each use. Use paper towels or separate hand towels to dry your hands.
- Eat meals away from others. Use your own cutlery, plate, and glass.
- Physically distance (6 feet) and limit your time with others as much as possible.
- Wear a mask when close contact with others is unavoidable, even when outside.
- Disinfect areas you touch that others may come in contact with, such as fridge and kitchen cupboard handles.

**You are not alone. If you need help, reach out**

If your symptoms are not manageable at home, seek medical care. You can be seen by a doctor at a COVID-19 Care Clinic where they can do chest X-Rays, blood work, and prescribe medications. Book an appointment online or by calling them.

Clinic information and hours can be found on our COVID-19 Testing Information page: OttawaPublicHealth.ca/COVIDtesting.

If you are in distress, go to the nearest Emergency Department or call 9-1-1 (experiencing significant trouble breathing, chest pain, fainting, or have significant
worsening of any chronic disease symptoms). It is okay to break isolation in order to seek urgent medical care.

Note that urgent medical care includes babies under 3 months of age with a fever who should be seen by CHEO or the nearest emergency department. Be sure to tell the hospital you are COVID-19 positive or isolating due to symptoms or recent close contact. For non-emergency situations where you need medical help, visit a COVID-19 Care Clinic.

Isolation may also be broken to attend essential medical appointments with a healthcare professional that cannot be delayed, such as attending appointments for newborns 24-72 hours after discharge from hospital. Please discuss this with your healthcare provider.

It's okay to not be okay. People have loved ones in hospital, many businesses are fighting to keep their doors open, children and adolescents are struggling with online learning and social isolation, and essential workers are exhausted. If you or your loved one are struggling with overwhelming sadness, anxiety, loneliness, or anger, reach out for help by calling your family doctor or a mental health professional.

If you need immediate help, call:

The Ottawa Distress Line/ Help Line at 613-238-3311 or
The Mental Health Crisis Line at 613-722-6914

For further information on community resources available to you, please see the attached list. We are happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have, please don’t hesitate to call us. Our operating hours are Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. If you are in need of immediate medical assistance, call 9-1-1.

We thank you for following the COVID-19 instructions to keep your community safe.

Sincerely,

The COVID-19 Case Management Team
Ottawa Public Health