Dear Client,

Due to more people testing positive for COVID-19, and the spread of the Omicron variant, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) is changing case and contact management practices in Ottawa. Some of the requirements for high-risk contacts have changed. Please read this entire letter carefully and follow the instructions. Please be aware that you will **not** receive a call from Ottawa Public Health at this time.

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 for **10 days** from the day of your last contact with this individual.

This is the law, and you can find more information about the Class Order on the OPH website: [www.ottawapublichealth.ca/COVID19Instructions](http://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/COVID19Instructions). We appreciate your part in helping to slow the spread in our community.

**Who is a high-risk contact?**

A **high-risk contact** is any individual who has been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 during the period that the person can pass on 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 2 metres (6 feet) for a prolonged time or having multiple close encounters to an individual who tested positive for COVID-19, even when both people are wearing a mask. 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?**

You must self-isolate if:

- You have symptoms, regardless of your vaccination status or if you have had a previous COVID-19 infection.
- You live with the person who tested positive, regardless of your vaccination status or if you have had a previous COVID-19 infection.
- You are immunocompromised.
- You are partially vaccinated or unvaccinated.
- You work at, attend, or were exposed to a person who tested positive for COVID-19 in one of these places:
  o An elementary, secondary, or post-secondary school
  o Childcare facility or camp
  o A hospital or healthcare setting (including complex continuing care facilities and acute care facilities)
  o A congregate living setting (e.g., Long-Term Care, Retirement Homes, group homes, shelters, hospices, post-secondary dormitories, temporary foreign worker setting, correctional institutions).

If any of the above applies to you, you must self-isolate for 10 days from your last contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19.

If you cannot break contact (e.g., parent to a young child) from the person who tested positive follow the guidance below for the scenario that applies to you:

- If you are not fully vaccinated* you must self-isolate for 10 days from the last day of the isolation period of the person who tested positive.
- If you are fully vaccinated* with no symptoms, your isolation period will be the same as the person who tested positive for COVID-19 (i.e., 10 days from their symptom onset or date of positive test if they have no symptoms).
- If you are fully vaccinated* and have symptoms of COVID-19, continue to self-isolate and get PCR testing. If you test negative, self-isolate until the last day of isolation of the person who tested positive AND your symptoms have improved for 24 hours (48 for gastrointestinal symptoms).

You do not need to self-isolate if you answer YES to all of the following:

✓ You are fully vaccinated*
AND
✓ You do not have symptoms
AND
✓ You do not live with the person who tested positive
AND
✓ You do not meet any of the above self-isolation criteria

If you answered YES to all, you must self-monitor for symptoms, get tested, inform your employer of your exposure, and avoid vulnerable places and people (e.g., residents of long-term care homes, hospital patients or people with chronic illnesses that may compromise their immune system) for 10 days following your exposure.

*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 or AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD, 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).

Get Tested

OPH recommends all high-risk contacts go for PCR testing immediately if you have symptoms or develop them. If you do not have symptoms, go for PCR testing 7 days from the day you were last exposed to the person who tested positive. If you cannot break contact from the person who tested positive (e.g., parent to a young child) get tested 7 days after the positive person developed symptoms, or 7 days after the positive person’s test date if they have no symptoms.

Because of the increase in people testing positive, our testing centres are extremely busy. It may take more time for you to book an appointment and receive your test results.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and are not able to access PCR testing, or if you have had a positive rapid antigen test, please assume you are positive. You must self-isolate for 10 days from the day your symptoms started and tell your household members to self-isolate for 10 days from their last contact with you.

When can you end your self-isolation?

If you are required to self-isolate, you must continue isolating for the full 10 days even if your test result is negative and/or you do not have any symptoms.

What should your household members do while you self-isolate?

In all circumstances, your household contacts should self-monitor for symptoms and avoid vulnerable persons such as residents of long-term care homes, hospital patients or people with chronic illnesses that may compromise their immune system.

If you do NOT have any symptoms:

- Your household members who were not exposed to the person who tested positive for COVID-19 do not need to stay home for the duration of your self-isolation period. Your household members should continue to follow regular public health guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
If you have or develop symptoms:

- Your household members must self-isolate, regardless of their vaccination status, until your test result is available. If your result is negative, your household members can stop isolating.

Where to go for testing

Testing site hours can be found on our COVID-19 Testing Information page.

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. 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.
- Get fresh air by spending time in your yard or on your patio or balcony. You must remain on your property.
- 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.
- Have someone outside of your household take your dog for a walk.
- 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.

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.
Important: COVID-19 symptoms can get worse quickly. If this happens, **don’t wait to seek medical help.** It is ok to break isolation for this. If you are having difficulty breathing, shortness of breath at rest, chest pain, or fainting, **call 9-1-1.**

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.

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

Sincerely,

The COVID-19 Case Management Team
Ottawa Public Health