

Subject: COVID-19 High-Risk Exposure

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 5 or 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. We appreciate your part in helping to stop 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?

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 assume you are positive. You must self-isolate for 5 or 10 days (depending on your age and vaccination status) from the day your symptoms started and tell your household members to self-isolate. More information can be found on [OttawaPublicHealth.ca](https://ottawapublichealth.ca).

If you do NOT have symptoms and you:

<p>Live with the person who tested positive for COVID-19</p>	<p>You must self-isolate immediately for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 days if you are fully vaccinated* or under 12 years of age (if you work/volunteer or attend a highest risk setting** you must not attend this setting for 10 days). • 10 days if you are over 12 years and partially vaccinated or unvaccinated. • 10 days if you are immune compromised regardless of age or vaccination status. <p>Continue to self-monitor for symptoms for 10 days and if you develop symptoms continue to self-isolate and get tested if you are eligible.</p>
<p>Do NOT live with the person who tested positive for COVID-19</p>	<p>Self-isolate for 10 days from the date of your last contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19 if you are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 12 years of age and partially vaccinated or unvaccinated. • Immune compromised, regardless of age or vaccination status. <p>Self-isolate for 5 days from the date of your last contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19 if you are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under 12 years of age (if you work/volunteer or attend a highest risk setting** you must not attend this setting for 10 days).

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	<p>You do not need to self-isolate if you are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully vaccinated* (if you work/volunteer or attend a highest risk setting** you must not attend this setting for 10 days). <p>Self-monitor for symptoms for 10 days and if you develop symptoms continue to self-isolate and get tested if you are eligible.</p> <p>Exposures at elementary, secondary, or post-secondary schools and childcare centres are generally not considered high-risk exposures when appropriate precautions were maintained. Unless directed otherwise, you are not required to self-isolate if exposed only at one of these settings.</p>
<p>Live in a highest risk setting**</p>	<p>You must self-isolate for 10 days regardless of your vaccination status.</p>
<p>Work at, volunteer at, or attend a highest risk setting** (however if you also live with the person who tested positive, follow the above isolation instructions)</p>	<p>Self-isolate for 10 days from the date of your last contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19 if you are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 12 years of age and partially vaccinated or unvaccinated. • Immune compromised, regardless of age or vaccination status. <p>Self-isolate for 5 days from the date of your last contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19 if you are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under 12 years of age (if you work/volunteer or attend a highest risk setting** you must not attend this setting for 10 days). <p>You do not need to self-isolate if you are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully vaccinated* (if you work/volunteer or attend a highest risk setting** you must not attend this setting for 10 days).

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	Self-monitor for symptoms for 10 days and if you develop symptoms continue to self-isolate and get tested if you are eligible.
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***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).

****Highest risk settings** include:

- Hospitals and health care settings^{***}, including complex continuing care facilities and acute care facilities.
- Congregate living settings, e.g. long-term care homes, retirement homes, First Nation elder care lodges, group homes, shelters, hospices, temporary foreign worker settings, and correctional institutions.
- First Nations, Inuit, Métis communities.

^{***}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). If the employer is not directing return to work in their setting, health care workers should assess their practice settings to consider the risks and benefits of returning to work after 5 days of isolation if it means it could lead to 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 5 or 10 days even if your result is negative and/or you do not have any symptoms.

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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 are not required to self-isolate:

- Your household members do not need to isolate.

If you have or develop symptoms:

- Your household members would be considered high-risk contacts and must self-isolate as outlined above.

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.

Where to go for testing if you are eligible

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.

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- 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

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