



February 2024

A reminder to schools and child care and early years service providers from Ottawa Public Health (OPH) amid the respiratory illness season

Respiratory Illness - General Key Messages:

Common symptoms of respiratory illness

- Fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath, muscle aches, fatigue, vomiting/diarrhea, abdominal pain.

What to do if you have symptoms

- Stay home until you are fever-free without using fever-reducing medication **AND** your symptoms have been improving for 24 hours (48 hours for vomiting/diarrhea).
- Don't visit those at high-risk of severe illness including those in long-term care, retirement homes or in hospital.
- Wear a mask to protect yourself from viral respiratory illnesses; protect others at higher risk of severe respiratory illness from getting sick, and when you're recovering from illness.

How respiratory viruses spread

- Through the air such as when a person coughs or sneezes. Droplets from the cough or sneeze can reach another person's nose or mouth and be inhaled, or they may come in contact with a person's eyes or mouth.
- Direct contact: such as kissing an infected person.
- Indirect contact: such as touching a surface, like a toy, doorknob, or another person, that has germs (virus) on it, then touching their mouth, nose or eyes with unwashed hands.

Reducing the spread of respiratory illness

- Keep your vaccinations up to date including getting your annual flu vaccine and any COVID-19 doses you may be eligible for.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Wash your hands often and avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
- Disinfect high-touch surfaces in your home and workplace.
- Wear a mask:
 - To protect yourself from viral respiratory illnesses;
 - To protect others at higher risk of severe respiratory illness; and
 - When you're recovering from illness.



Influenza (flu) Key Messages:

- Influenza (flu) is a viral infection that can have severe complications. Anyone can get the flu virus. The flu is not just a cold. You could miss school, work, special events, or even end up in the hospital.
- The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone six months of age and over and is especially important for high-risk groups/those who may spread the flu to those at higher risk.
- High risk groups for flu include infants and young children as they have a higher risk of being hospitalized and having a severe illness with the flu.
- Flu season is here and often continues into spring; it's not too late to get your flu shot.
- Young children are at increased risk from a strain of the flu (influenza B) which typically begins to increase at this time of year and peaks in the early spring; the currently available flu vaccine for children provides protection from influenza B.
- If your child under 9 received their flu vaccine for the first time this year, they should receive a second dose, at least 4 weeks later, for best protection. Flu vaccines are still available. Visit OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Flu for information on where to get the flu vaccine.
- Flu vaccines are still available in our community - Ottawa Public Health (OPH) Community Clinics and Neighbourhood Hubs offer influenza vaccines for individuals without OHIP and for children under 5 and their families.
- Complete our online form today at OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Flu to book an appointment to receive the flu vaccine at an OPH clinic.

Resources for Parents and Caregivers:

OttawaPublicHealth.ca/RespVirus

OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Flu

[OPH's "About Respiratory Illness" Factsheet](#)

[OPH and CHEO's "Where to Seek Care" Handout](#)

[CHEO's "What You Need to Know – Fever" Handout](#)

[CHEO's "Deciding When to Come to the Emergency Department" Handout](#)

[CHEO's Emergency Care Webpage](#)

Did You Know?

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) provides a weekly respiratory illness update on all our social media channels! This update helps to paint a picture of the local respiratory viral activity – we provide updates on the levels of COVID-19, influenza (flu) and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) activity along with a few helpful key messages to keep you and your family informed to make the choices that are right for you.



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Ottawa Public Health: www.facebook.com/OttawaHealth

Instagram:

OttawaHealthSante: www.instagram.com/OttawaHealthSante

Ottawa Parents and Caregivers!

OPH has a social media channel specifically designed for you! Parenting in Ottawa/Être Parent à Ottawa is a great resource for parents and caregivers. Staffed by Public Health Nurses (PHN) Monday to Friday, we discuss many health-related topics that matter to parents, we also have PHNs available to answer your questions on this platform.

Come follow us today!

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Parenting in Ottawa: www.facebook.com/ParentingInOttawa

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