

Student Protocols for COVID-19 Cases and Exposures

Revised: September 2022

Guiding principles

UWaterloo Health Services is here to support the student population with essential medical care. This guideline provides information on how to address student COVID-19 exposures for specific situations. **If you are concerned you may have COVID-19 you can perform [this self-assessment](#) to help you with next steps. If you have recently been exposed to COVID-19, or have tested positive on a rapid antigen test, you can click [here](#). Tables defining isolation periods as per Public Health can be found [here](#) and are at the end of this document.**

General terms:

Fully Vaccinated: an individual ≥ 14 days after receiving their second dose of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine series or their first dose of a one-dose COVID-19 vaccine series. The Vaccine must be approved for use in Canada

Rapid Antigen Screening: A test that helps identify individuals both symptomatic and asymptomatic, who may be infected with COVID. Test results are available within the hour. In most situations, positive rapid tests should be taken as valid and do not need to be confirmed with a PCR test or reported to public health

PCR test: A swab that is placed in the nose through to the back of the throat to test for COVID-19. It is only available through testing centers and will take 1-4 days to get results. At this time, it is only available to those in the highest risk settings and most students will not qualify for this type of testing.

If any student will miss classes, due dates, or exams due to illness related to COVID-19:

- Contact your course instructors before, or within 48-hours of a test, exam or due date
- Complete the illness [self-declaration](#) form in the Personal Information section of QUEST

A student in residence is responsible for self-isolation if:

- They test positive for COVID-19
- Are experiencing COVID-19 related symptoms
- Have been advised to isolate by a medical professional/public health
- Are NOT fully vaccinated AND living with someone who is experiencing COVID-19 related symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19

[Residence Life Processes and Protocols](#) relating to COVID-19 can be located [here](#). These protocols provide the necessary guidance relating to self-isolation, as well as resources to support students if isolation is required.

If the student has additional questions, they can submit a webform to the [Campus Wellness COVID-19 Support and Advice](#) page and a nurse from Health Services will connect with the student to assist. This page is monitored during University operating hours.

COVID-19 Symptoms

Individuals with any of these symptoms below should self-isolate and stay at home until fever is resolved AND their symptoms have been improving for at least 24 hours (48 hours for gastrointestinal symptoms)

One or more of the following symptoms:

- **Fever and/or chills**
- **Cough** -Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- **Shortness of breath** -Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., chronic heart failure, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- **Decrease or loss of smell or taste** -Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., nasal polyps, allergies, neurological disorders)

Two or more of the following symptoms:

- **Extreme fatigue** (general feeling of being unwell, lack of energy, extreme tiredness) - Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., depression, insomnia, thyroid dysfunction, anemia, malignancy, receiving a COVID-19 or flu vaccine in the past 48 hours)
- **Muscle aches or joint pain** -Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., osteoarthritis, fibromyalgia, receiving a COVID-19 or flu vaccine in the past 48 hours)
- **Gastrointestinal symptoms (i.e., nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea)** -Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., transient vomiting due to anxiety in children, chronic vestibular dysfunction, irritable bowel syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease, side effect of medication)
- **Sore throat (painful swallowing or difficulty swallowing)**-Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., post-nasal drip, gastroesophageal reflux)
- **Runny nose or nasal congestion** -Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., returning inside from the cold, chronic sinusitis unchanged from baseline, seasonal allergies)
- **Headache** -Not related to other known causes or conditions (e.g., tension-type headaches, chronic migraines, receiving a COVID-19 or flu vaccine in the last 48 hours)

Other symptoms that may be associated with COVID-19 include abdominal pain, conjunctivitis (pink eye) or decreased or lack of appetite for young children

| Population | Isolation period | Additional precautions after self-isolation period |
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| Individuals with severe illness ¹ (requiring ICU level of care) | At least 20 days (or at discretion of hospital IPAC) after the date of specimen collection or symptom onset (whichever is earlier/applicable) and until symptoms have been improving for 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms) and no fever present. | N/A |
| Individuals who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • residing in a highest risk setting • hospitalized for COVID19 related illness (not requiring ICU level of care) • immunocompromised | At least 10 days after the date of specimen collection or symptom onset (whichever is earlier/applicable) and until symptoms have been improving for 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms) and no fever present. | N/A |

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| <p>All other individuals not listed above who have COVID-19 symptoms</p> <p>OR</p> <p>A positive COVID-19 test (PCR, rapid molecular or rapid antigen test)</p> | <p>Until symptoms have been improving for 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms) and no fever present.</p> <p>Asymptomatic individuals with a positive test result do not need to self-isolate unless symptoms develop. If symptoms develop, they should self-isolate immediately</p> | <p>For a total of 10 days after the date of specimen collection or symptom onset (whichever is earlier/applicable), individuals should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Continue to wear a well-fitted mask in all public settings (including schools and childcare, unless under 2 years old) -Avoid non-essential activities where mask removal is necessary (e.g., dining out, playing a wind instrument, high contact sports where masks cannot be safely worn) -Not visit anyone who is immunocompromised or at higher risk of illness (e.g., seniors) -Avoid non-essential visits to highest risk settings such as hospitals and long-term care homes |
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https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/contact_mngmt/management_cases_contacts.pdf

Use of Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT):

Individuals with COVID-19 symptoms who use rapid antigen tests should be aware that they may produce false negative results, particularly early in COVID-19 infection. Repeat testing at least 24 hours after an initial negative test improves confidence in a negative test result.

There is no provincial public health requirement for workers who are test-positive cases or isolated due to COVID-19 symptoms to provide proof of a negative test result or a positive serological test result to their employers in order to return to work. It is expected that workers who have tested positive or who have symptoms of COVID-19 follow public health isolation recommendations.

Close Contacts:

You were in close proximity (less than 2 meters) to a case for at least 15 minutes or for multiple short periods of time without measures such as masking, distancing, and/or use of personal protective equipment depending on the nature of contact.

Household and Non-Household Contacts:

For a total of 10 days after the last exposure to the COVID-19 positive case or individual with COVID-19 symptoms, the individual notified by a case **should:**

1. Self-monitor for symptoms. Self-isolate immediately if they develop any symptom of COVID-19 and seek testing if eligible
2. Wear a well fitted mask in all public settings:
 - Individuals should maintain masking as much as possible in public settings (including school and child care, unless under 2 years old). Reasonable exceptions would include removal for essential activities like eating, while maintaining as much distancing as possible
 - Participation in activities where masking can be maintained throughout may be resumed, but individuals should avoid activities where mask removal would be necessary (e.g., dining out; playing a wind instrument; high contact sports where masks cannot be safely worn)
 - Individuals who are unable to mask (e.g., children under two years of age, etc.) may return to public settings without masking

3. Avoid non-essential visits to anyone who is immunocompromised or at higher risk of illness (e.g., seniors)
4. Avoid non-essential visits to highest risk settings such as hospitals and long-term care homes. Where essential visit cannot be avoided, close contacts should wear a medical mask, maintain physical distancing, and notify the highest risk setting of their recent exposure