

Resumption of student learning – January 2022

Question and answer guide for school authorities

Guidance documents/data/CMOH orders

When will guidance documents be updated and available, including public health guidance for K-12 in schools, daily checklist, mask guidance, CMOH order (exclusions) and resource guides?

The school guidance and daily checklist are anticipated to be updated by the end of the week. Additional resource documents will be added as needed.

What will be the requirement for K-6 exclusions if the CMOH order remains in place?

CMOH Order 48-2021 sets out the conditions for excluding unvaccinated K-6 students from in-person school attendance when there are three or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 who attended class while infectious within a five day period. This order will be rescinded and no longer applicable.

What are expectations of schools to provide masks and rapid?

Students will return to in-person learning with the added safety of access to rapid tests and millions of medical-grade masks. These will be distributed to schools to lower the risk of in-school transmission of the Omicron variant of COVID-19. Masks are required for grades 4-12 and recommended for ECS-3. Rapid tests and masks will be provided for all ECS-12 students and staff. Rapid test use is optional. Rapid tests are to be administered at home.

What data will be available regarding COVID-19 in schools?

COVID-19 case data will no longer be available to support the previous approach to public reporting on COVID-19 in schools. However, the departments of Health and Education are working together to determine what might be feasible.

Has there been an update to the guidance for schools regarding extra-curricular activities and field trips?

The guidance documents are being updated. School authorities will be notified once new guidance documents are posted.

Masks

Will the provision of masks result in changes to mask guidance for K-3 students? Are there changes to in class/school wearing of masks such as wearing masks at all times or can they be removed when facing forward, for example?

Masks are strongly recommended for K-3 students. Due to transmissibility of Omicron, it is recommended for students and teachers to wear masks at all times, including when seated or facing forward. Masking along with physical distancing will help reduce transmission.

Is there guidance on how often masks should be changed?

Resources available:

- [Alberta Health Guidance on Masks for the General Public.](#)

- [Government of Canada website](#)

Generally:

- Store your mask in a clean paper or cloth bag if you plan to wear it again.
- Change your mask when it's dirty, damp or damaged, and keep it out of reach of others.
- Store soiled reusable non-medical masks in a waterproof bag or container until they can be cleaned.
- Wash reusable non-medical masks (in a washing machine or by hand) with hot, soapy water, and dry completely before wearing again.
- Dispose of dirty, damp or damaged disposable masks and used filters in the garbage or use a mask recycling program if one is available.
- Medical masks and respirators are generally single use and disposable. However, some may be reused until visibly dirty, damp or damaged. Check product-specific information to determine how masks are to be used.

[Is there a requirement to use the medical-grade masks that are being supplied to schools?](#)

There is no requirement to use the medical masks and reusable non-medical masks are also protective, but if the medical masks are available they should be used as well. It is important that the mask fits well to be protective. Masks for K-3 are strongly recommended.

[How will the masks be packaged when they come to schools? Will they be packaged for individual distribution to students and staff?](#)

Masks come in different packaging and the schools will have to distribute and re-pack as required. Each student and staff should receive enough for a two week supply, using two masks per school day (10 masks x 2 = 20 masks per person). Additional information on packaging instructions will be shared shortly.

[Is there information about the types of masks that will be distributed? What do the levels mean?](#)

Adult masks are Level 3 and child masks are Level 2. Level 3 masks have greater than 98% filtration efficiency and protect against heavy levels of aerosols, spray and/or fluids. Level 2 masks have greater than 98% filtration efficiency and protect against low to medium levels of aerosols, spray and/or fluids.

Rapid Tests

[Is there guidance on how often to use the rapid test?](#)

The rapid test should be used twice per week, 72 hours apart (e.g. Sunday and Wednesday or Monday and Thursday). Additional information is available [online](#).

[Is there a requirement to report rapid test results to Alberta Health or employers? Is this different for staff vs students?](#)

There is no requirement to report a positive rapid test result.

[How will the rapid tests be packaged when they come to schools? Will they be packaged for individual distribution to students and staff? How many tests will be in each box?](#)

The rapid tests come in a box of five. Each ECS-12 student and staff will be given one box for each distribution that will provide them with enough tests for 2.5 weeks.

[Is there a video or instructions on how to use rapid tests?](#)

A how-to video and a rapid test program fact sheet translated into multiple languages offers tips on how to use the rapid test kits. Both are available online at <https://www.alberta.ca/k-12-learning-during-covid-19.aspx> and may be useful for your school communities.

Mask and Rapid Test Shipments

When will masks/tests be delivered to schools?

Planning is underway to have deliveries to start late this week and continue the week of January 10th. A recurring biweekly schedule for ongoing mask deliveries will be established after the first shipment is completed.

When will masks and Rapid Tests be available to rural and remote communities?

Planning is underway to have deliveries to start late this week and continue the week of January 10th.

Does the school or school authority need to have someone on site to receive masks and rapid tests? If so, will deliveries be during school hours?

Staff must be available to receive the tests and masks. Alberta Health Services is not able to provide tracking information for shipments. Efforts will be made to deliver between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Should there be any questions, please email edc.schoolrapidtesting@gov.ab.ca. This inbox is continuously monitored and is the fastest way to receive a response. If required, you can also contact Rick Grebenstein at 780-422-6018.

Are there specific storage requirements for rapid tests?

Rapid tests should be stored between 2 degrees and 30 degrees Celsius. The BTNX tests should not be frozen. If they are accidentally frozen they can be thawed for 30 minutes to room temperature and then can still be used.

Is there an expectation for schools or school authorities to report on usage/utilization of masks and rapid tests? If so, what will this look like? What if we have too many or too few masks?

Education will be reaching out to school authorities following the first distribution of rapid tests and masks to determine the uptake and minimize potential excess of unused rapid tests and masks.

School Shifts

Why did you change the shift period to 10 calendar days?

The shift to at-home learning will be due to operational reasons, not due to an individual positive case. A 10-day shift reduces the need to have extensions to the length of shifts which results in uncertainty for students, parents and staff. This also aligns with the maximum isolation period.

If there is no data available on cases what information will you be looking at to determine school shifts?

School authorities should provide any available data or information, including data on staff absences, student absenteeism, or any other information that may help quantify the request. Additional contextual information is also requested in order to place the request into perspective.

Who should I contact if I have questions about what information to submit or my unique situation?

Please contact educationcovidguidance@gov.ab.ca if you have any questions.

How long will it take to get approval to shift?

Alberta Education expects to respond to school authority requests to shift within the same business day.