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Ontario COVID-19 Updates

Ontario Moves Back to Step Two of the Roadmap to Reopen

On January 3, 2022, the Ontario Government announced that the province would be placed back into Step Two of the Roadmap to Reopen. [Click here](#) for a bullet point list of the restrictions, effective January 5, 2022. Two key points are:

- Ontario is now requiring businesses and organizations to ensure employees work remotely unless the nature of their work requires them to be on-site.
- All publicly funded and private schools will move to remote learning starting January 5 until at least January 17, subject to public health trends and operational considerations.

Appropriate Face Masks

The Ontario Government, as well as Public Health Ontario, have given the direction that we should all wear medical masks, KN95 masks, or N95 masks in the workplace and out in the community as the best form of protection against COVID-19. **Cloth masks are no longer deemed suitable.**

Should you need to order medical masks or KN95 masks, you can order from Steel Fire Equipment Ltd, one of our clients. **To view their full list of PPE/COVID-19 related products, [click here](#). To order any PPE/COVID-19 related products, please email sales@steelfire.com.** Please note that you may see on their website that Steel Fire typically only partners with companies in the fire and life safety industries, but they do provide PPE/COVID-19 products, such as masks, to all companies/industries.

COVID-19 Symptoms Updated

The Ontario Government has updated the list of COVID-19 symptoms in light of the Omicron variant. Please [click here](#) for the list. The list reintroduces previously removed symptoms such as runny nose, headache, sore throat.

Please note that we have also been seeing evidence of individuals developing severe throat pain/being hospitalized due to an inability to swallow after reporting that the pain started out as a mild tickly or scratchy throat. **The key point is that symptoms can go from mild to very serious over the course of a few days.**

Definition of Fully Vaccinated

The Ontario Government may be looking to change the definition of what it means to be fully vaccinated by **requiring a third dose (booster) of an accepted COVID-19 vaccine**. HR Performance & Results will be closely following this and will provide a separate update should the definition be changed.

Isolation Period and COVID-19 Testing

PCR Testing

Effective December 31, 2021, publicly funded PCR testing is only available for high-risk individuals who are immunocompromised or who are exposed to high-risk settings. Please [click here](#) for a full list of those who are eligible for PCR testing.

Members of the general public with mild symptoms will not be able to get PCR tested. In addition, most individuals with a positive result from a rapid antigen test will no longer be required or encouraged to get a confirmatory PCR or rapid molecular test.

Rapid Antigen Testing

It must be noted that rapid antigen tests are not 100% effective in identifying a person with COVID-19. The rapid test will likely not detect a person with COVID-19 unless the swab picks up a high viral load when the test is administered. As such, someone who has symptoms must still self-isolate even if they perform a rapid test that reads negative. They should then do a second test 24 to 48 hours later if available. If the second test taken within 48 hours of the first negative result is also negative, this most likely means they do not have COVID-19.

Isolation Period

Ontario has also changed the required isolation period for fully vaccinated individuals based on growing evidence that generally healthy people with COVID-19 are most infectious in the two days before and three days after symptoms develop.

For fully vaccinated individuals, and children under 12, the isolation period will be **5 days starting on the day symptoms first appear**. Individuals living in the same household as people in this category will also be required to self-isolate for the 5-day period. If the close contact is with a person outside of your household, you must self-monitor for symptoms for 10 days and self-isolate if symptoms develop. Isolation may end after five days if symptoms are improved for at least 24 hours (48 hours for symptoms that affect the digestive system). As such, individuals may have to self-isolate for much longer than 5 days depending on when their symptoms begin to improve.

Individuals who are unvaccinated, partially vaccinated or immunocompromised will be required to isolate for **10 days**.

Contact Tracing

It is important that employers continue to perform contact tracing efforts as much as possible. If an employee discloses that they have a symptom(s) of COVID-19, steps must be taken to identify any other employees who may have had close contact with them. These close contact employees should be told to self-monitor for symptoms for 10 days and self-isolate if symptoms develop if they are fully vaccinated - or be told to self-isolate immediately for 10 days if they are unvaccinated.

As a reminder, close contact means anyone you were less than two metres away from for at least 15 minutes, or multiple shorter lengths of time, without personal protective equipment in the 48 hours before your symptoms began or your positive test result, whichever came first.

Close contact employees should be provided with [this link](#) if being notified.

Paid Infectious Disease Emergency Leave

Employers are required to provide eligible employees with up to three days of **paid** infectious disease emergency leave for certain reasons related to COVID-19. Paid infectious disease emergency leave is retroactive to April 19, 2021, and continues until July 31, 2022.

Although the leave has been extended to July 2022, employees are not entitled to additional days specific to 2022. Employees are entitled to up to three days total during the period in which paid infectious disease emergency leave is available - **an employee's days do not reset as of January 1, 2022**. For more information, [click here](#).

Blog



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-  [Sector-specific Health & Safety Guidelines, Posters and Tip Sheets](#)
-  [Canada Recovery Hiring Program \(CRHP\)](#)
-  [COVID-19 Screening Tool for Workplaces](#)
-  [Educating Employees on the COVID-19 Vaccine](#)
-  [COVID-19 Self-Assessment](#)
-  [When and How to Properly Wear a Mask](#)
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