Southeast Public Health

November 18, 2026

Dear parents, guardians and staff:

Subject: Respiratory virus season is here; take precautions to prevent the spread of illness in our school communities

Please be advised that respiratory illnesses, including influenza (flu) and COVID-19, are circulating in the Southeast Public Health region. We are providing this information so that you will be able to take steps to ensure the best protection possible for yourself and your family.

Influenza and COVID-19 can cause mild to severe illness and can lead to serious health complications, even in healthy children and adults. Immunization is the best way to prevent these illnesses.

The flu and COVID-19 vaccines are available free of charge to everyone six months of age and older who lives, works or goes to school in Ontario. It is safe and convenient to receive both vaccines at the same time. Contact your health-care provider or local pharmacy for your vaccines if your family has not yet been immunized. For children under 5 years of age who cannot receive their immunizations from their health-care provider, Southeast Public Health is offering clinics. Visit the immunization clinic booking page at SoutheastPH.ca/appointments to book an appointment.

In addition to immunization, people should regularly wash their hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer, cough and sneeze into their elbow or a tissue instead of their hands, wear a well-fitted mask in indoor public places and regularly disinfect high-touch surfaces to help prevent the spread of illness.

The symptoms of influenza include:

- fever (greater than 38ºC or 100.4ºF)
- cough or chills
- headache or muscle aches

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- loss of appetite
- nausea or vomiting (mainly in young children)
- sore throat
- runny nose

If your child is feeling unwell, please keep them home until they are fever-free and their symptoms have improved for at least 24 hours (or 48 hours if they've had vomiting or diarrhea). When your child returns to school, we encourage them to wear a well-fitting mask for 10 days from when their symptoms started to help keep others healthy. To learn more about how to protect yourself, your family, and your community from respiratory illnesses, visit Ontario's respiratory illness page.

Regards,

Southeast Public Health