

FAQ for students and families: COVID-19

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Getting back to school

What is the plan for getting back to school?

- Yukon public schools are returning students to face-to-face classes in schools based on the advice of Yukon’s Chief Medical Officer of Health.
- Yukon’s Chief Medical Officer has established [health and safety guidelines for K-12 school](#) settings to guide the return to school.
- Each school has developed its own operational plan to meet the health and safety guidelines to protect students, staff and visitors to the school.
- Based on the health and safety guidelines:
 - Rural students in Kindergarten to Grade 12 can return to full-time in-class instruction five days a week.
 - Whitehorse students in Kindergarten to Grade 9 can return to full-time in-class instruction five days a week.
 - Whitehorse high school students in Grades 10-12 will return to a blend of in-class learning for half the school day and learning away from school for the other half of the day for five-days a week.

- Learn more: yukon.ca/planning-for-2020-21-school-year

Where can I find out about the health and safety measures at my school?

- Each school and community in Yukon is different in its size, layout and student population.
- Each school has developed its own operational plan to meet the health and safety guidelines to protect students, staff and visitors to the school.
- School operational plans have been shared by school principals directly to students, families and school staff and posted on school websites.
- Find your school's operational plan by visiting your school's website.
- You can find your school website at: yukon.ca/en/education-and-schools/kindergarten-grade-12/directory.

Will school shut down if there is an outbreak?

- As many students as possible will be kept in schools for face-to-face learning, based on advice from Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health.
- Should there be an increased risk of transmission, a second wave or a community outbreak of COVID-19, Yukon schools will adjust operations, which may include reducing the number of students receiving face-to-face learning, based on the advice of Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health.
- Talk to your school principal about your school's operational plan and about learning supports at your school.
- Learn more about the plan for schools during the pandemic: yukon.ca/en/school-during-covid-19.

Health and safety

What can I do to support my child to stay healthy and safe at school?

- Parents are encouraged to review health and safety routines regularly with their child or children. This includes:
 - washing hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds;
 - using hand sanitizer when you can't wash your hands;
 - coughing and sneezing into our elbows;
 - using a tissue to blow our nose, and then throwing the tissue in the garbage;
 - keeping a 2-metre distance from your friends and teachers as much as you can;
 - making sure your child or children tells you when they are sick or showing symptoms and keeping them home when they are sick or showing symptoms.

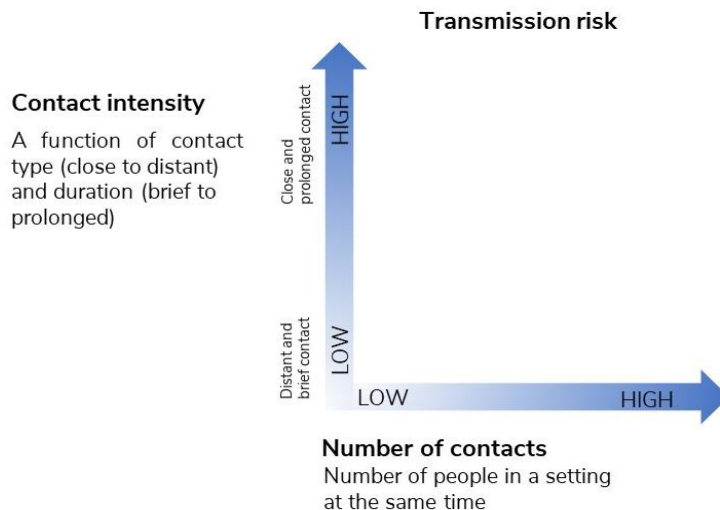
Aren't schools higher risk because children spread disease faster?

- The health and safety guidelines for K-12 school settings set by Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health state:
 - Keeping students out of school has negative impacts on their mental health.
 - Children and youth are not the primary drivers of COVID-19 spread in schools or community settings.
 - Outbreaks involving children and youth are unusual and tend to only occur in areas where there are high levels of community spread.
 - There is no conclusive evidence that shows children who are symptomatic pose a risk to other children or adults.

- Children and youth typically have much milder symptoms of COVID-19 most often presenting with low-grade fever and a dry cough.
- Currently, the COVID-19 virus has a very low infection rate in children and youth. Most children and youth are not at high risk for COVID-19 infection.
- Although research has shown the above, proper health and safety measures still need to be in place to reduce risk.

What is the level of risk in a school setting?

- With the implementation of the health and safety Guidelines for K-12 school settings and operational plans for each school, schools are low risk environments for staff and students to return to.
- The risk of transmission in a school is based on:
 - the number of people together at one time;
 - how close they are to each other; and
 - the type of contact they have and for how long.
- For example, a low risk situation would include two students briefly passing each other in a hallway. Holding a student general assembly in a gymnasium for a longer period-of-time is an example of a high-risk situation.



Will students and staff in schools practice physical distancing?

- The best way to stop the spread of COVID-19 is through preventative measures, such as physical distancing and frequent hand washing.
- All schools are practicing physical distancing where possible.
- The health and safety guidelines for K-12 school settings acknowledge that physical distancing of 2 metres is not always possible with children and may not be developmentally appropriate in some cases.
- Where not possible, risks are reduced by increasing other measures. Schools are making sure to emphasize:
 - minimizing physical contact;
 - keep groups of students together and limit mixing;
 - hand washing with soap and water for 20 seconds or sanitizing with an alcohol based hand rub;
 - enhanced cleaning and disinfecting;
 - making sure students and staff stay home when sick or showing symptoms.

Do students and staff have to wear masks in school or on the bus?

- The best way to stop the spread of COVID-19 is through preventative measures, such as physical distancing and frequent hand washing.
- Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health recommends masks for students over the age of 10 when physical distancing is not possible.
- This may include:
 - in some school hallways or common areas,
 - on the school bus;
 - when a staff member is supporting a student who needs assistance with activities of daily living, such as washing, using the bathroom, eating, etc.

- While they are recommended, masks are not mandatory at school or on the school bus.
- Masks will be available through each school for students and staff when needed.

Will schools be cleaned more often?

- There will be increased cleaning and disinfecting in every Yukon school.
- Government of Yukon custodial staff will be cleaning and disinfecting the school with disinfectants approved by Health Canada and will follow [cleaning and disinfecting guidelines](#) set by Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health.
- High-touch areas and equipment, including shared items for learning will be wiped down and cleaned more frequently.
- Staff and students may also help with tidying up and cleaning, just as they usually would after activities. Students may be asked to help out by washing their hands, cleaning their desk and cleaning up after using shared items for learning.

Will there be food or meals at school?

- Food served at school must be individually portioned or wrapped and cannot be served buffet-style.
- Food and drinks cannot be shared.
- Students and staff should practice proper hand washing before and after eating.
- Students are encouraged to bring their own water bottle for the school day to reduce contact at the water fountains.

What happens if students or staff are sick or showing symptoms?

- Students and staff must stay home if they are sick or showing symptoms of a common cold, influenza, COVID-19 or other infectious respiratory infection.
- Parents should monitor their child every day for symptoms before sending them to school.

- If you or your child have symptoms, phone 811 or your health care provider and follow the advice you are given around testing, self-isolation, etc.

Will students be monitored for symptoms at school?

- Parents, students and staff are asked to monitor for any symptoms every morning before going to school.
- Symptoms include: fever/chills, cough, shortness of breath, running nose, sore throat, headache, loss of sense of taste or smell, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea and muscle aches.
- Parents should consider if they are new or worsening symptoms when monitoring, or if they are otherwise not explained. For example, a child with asthma may have a persistent cough, which may not be new.
- To help assess symptoms, use the COVID-19 self-assessment tool at: service.yukon.ca/en/covid-19-self-assessment/.
- You can also print and post this helpful poster on your fridge to review every morning: yukon.ca/sites/yukon.ca/files/edu/edu-stay-home-when-sick-for-parents.pdf.
- If you have symptoms, phone 811 or your health care provided and follow the advice you are given around testing, self-isolation, etc.

What happens if someone gets sick at school?

- If a student or staff gets sick at school:
 - The student or staff will be immediately separated into a designated area.
 - The student or staff will be provided a mask.
 - The student's parent/guardian will be contacted to pick them up as soon as possible.
 - The school staff member who is sick will go home as soon as possible.
 - The designated area will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

What happens if a student or staff tests positive for COVID-19?

- Students or staff who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 will be required to self-isolate at home and follow instructions provided by Yukon Communicable Disease Control.
- Yukon Communicable Disease Control will contact the staff member or student and the student's parents who have been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Yukon Communicable Disease Control will also contact the school principal to discuss contact tracing at the school. They will work with the Chief Medical Officer of Health to investigate the case, to identify close contacts, isolation measures and any follow-up recommendations.
- If a student is required to self-isolate, staff will support the student to continue learning at home.

What happens if they have a family member at home who tests positive for COVID-19?

- Yukon Communicable Disease Control will contact the individual and their family if they have been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- The individual who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 will be required to self-isolate at home and follow instructions provided by Yukon Communicable Disease Control.
- Yukon Communicable Disease Control will make any follow-up recommendations, including whether other family members need to self-isolate.

If someone tests positive for COVID-19 at school, will the entire class or school have to stay home and self-isolate?

- Yukon Communicable Disease Control will identify and directly notify anyone who has been in close contact with a student or staff who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- Yukon Communicable Disease Control will provide direction on who will have to stay home and self-isolate and any other follow-up recommendations.

- The need for self-isolation will depend on the case and the information gathered about contact and exposure details.

When can students or staff who have tested positive for COVID-19 return to school?

- Yukon Communicable Disease Control and Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health will provide direction for when someone can safely return to school.
- Generally, this is 14 days after someone's signs and symptoms have started.

If a student or staff tests positive for COVID-19, will the school community be informed?

- Yukon Communicable Disease Control will directly contact the individual and their family if they have been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Yukon Communicable Disease Control will make any follow-up recommendations, including determining who else needs to be notified to ensure the privacy and security of personal health information.
- All necessary notifications will be completed by Yukon Communicable Disease Control with support from the Department of Education.

What if my child is immunocompromised?

- For students who are immunocompromised, please consult your health care provider for advice and guidance to determine if they can attend classes at school.

Learning during the school year

What will the school day look like?

- Schools follow their [school calendars](#). Whitehorse schools start on August 20 and Rural schools start between August 19 and Sept. 1.
- Students will learn new health and safety routines at their school.

- School schedules and detailed routines will be outlined in your school's operational plan.
- This may include staggered lunch and recess breaks, pick-up and drop off times and keeping students in smaller groups to limit mixing and traffic in common areas.

What will the classroom look like?

- Classrooms may look different due to spacing and cleaning measures.
- Desks may be rearranged and unnecessary items that are difficult to clean may be removed, like rugs, couches and stuffed toys.

Will students learn the full curriculum this school year?

- Yes, students will learn the full school curriculum.
- The [Yukon Learning Continuity Requirements](#) outline the expectations, approaches and supports for learning to deliver the curriculum and a full and complete school year during the pandemic.
- This includes:
 - guiding the delivery of blended learning in Yukon schools;
 - meeting all students where they are in their learning from last school year;
 - adapting school programming and instruction as needed over the course of the pandemic;
 - ensuring Yukon First Nations ways of know, doing and being are part of student instruction.

Will students catch up on what they missed last year?

- As a regular part of learning and assessment, teachers and school staff will assess where students are at in their learning at the beginning of the school year.
- As part of blended and personalized, flexible learning approaches, teachers meet students where they are at in their learning.

- This includes ensuring time for review at the beginning of the school year and identifying the steps the student and teacher need to take to ensure students are learning successfully.

Will students be able to learn at home if they cannot attend school because they are self-isolating or showing symptoms?

- Students must stay home if they are sick or have symptoms of COVID-19. If a student is unable to attend school, they will be provided their course work by their teacher as they normally would and will be supported in their learning in a way that meets their needs.
- If you are planning for your child to learn away from school for a longer period of time or the whole school year, please contact the school principal to discuss options, such as online learning or home education through Aurora Virtual School.

How will learning for Grade 10-12 students look?

- Students in Grades 10-12 in Whitehorse will be scheduled for half-day, in-class instruction and half-day learning away from school five days per week. In rural schools, they are attending school full-time, five days per week.
- Grades 10-12 students will still learn the full curriculum for their courses and be expected to complete their coursework during the half days that they are learning away from school.
- Teachers will follow a [blended learning model](#) for most grades this year. In-class time for Grades 10-12 will focus on teacher-led instruction and application of learning and learning away from school will focus on research, assignments, online collaboration and teacher-guided digital learning.
- Learning in class and away from school will both include digital and paper-based learning tools.
- Supervised study halls will also be available virtually and in-person to support these students in Grades 10-12 while they are learning away from school.
- Students and parents should check in with their school about specific programming at their school.

Will students learn online when they're not at school?

- If/when a student is learning away from school, teachers may provide learning activities and work that uses digital, online and paper-based learning tools.
- The teacher will provide learning and supports to the student in a way that meets their needs.
- Students and parents should contact their teacher to discuss learning needs and supports for learning away from school.

Will students be provided a device for learning when they're away from school?

- School principals and teachers will work with students who do not have access to a device at home to support them if required to do learning while away from class, including loaning a school device to those students who do not have personal devices.
- If a student is not able to access the internet while learning away from class, teachers will work with students to ensure they are able to complete their work in other ways.
- For Grades 10-12 students who do not have access to internet away from school, they may also access Wi-Fi and teacher support at your school's in-person study hall.
- Students and parents should contact their teacher to ensure learning is meeting their needs if/when they are required to do learning away from class.

What is blended learning?

- Blended learning provides school staff with more flexibility to respond to health and safety measures and to adapt if there are stricter limits placed on the number of students allowed to attend school.
- Blended learning combines:
 - Face-to-face teaching and learning, where students apply their knowledge, deepen their understanding and demonstrate their learning

with their teachers (teacher-led activities, on the land learning opportunities, work stations, labs, etc.).

- Student-led learning where students use digital and paper-based learning tools to gather information through inquiry, reading, research and work on assignments (online tools, resources, and collaboration).
 - Teacher support, instruction and feedback both in person and online.
 - Students learn skills to manage some of their own learning (goal setting, organization, prioritizing, time management, etc.) with some flexibility for the time, place, and pace of their learning.
- Blended learning supports students in developing valuable skills for the future, including positive work habits, time management, organization and problem solving.
 - Blended learning reflects learning and working models at postsecondary schools and modern work environments and supports skills development for when students move on to the next stages of their lives and careers.
 - Learn more about blended learning: <https://yukon.ca/en/what-blended-learning-handout>.

How will students with disabilities or who need additional supports be supported?

- Resource programs for students with disabilities, transitions programs and other programs for students needing different supports will continue at school all day every day.
- School principals will work with their staff to ensure these students are supported in a way that meets their needs and the needs of their families.
- School staff will regularly communicate with the parents to provide updates on their learning plans and progress.

Will students be able to share learning materials?

- Sharing of school supplies and learning materials will be limited. If shared, materials need to be cleaned and disinfected.
- To limit sharing, all students are required to have their own school supplies. Parents may contact their school if they need support for their school supplies.
- Some classes may use some shared learning materials, such as toys, blocks and other materials for learning, which will be cleaned and disinfected using soap and water or a disinfectant wipe.
- Students will be asked to wash or sanitize their hands before and after each use of any shared learning materials.
- Paper-based materials like textbooks, books and paper handouts are okay to use and share, as outlined in the health and safety guidelines for schools.

Will students be able to participate in extra-curricular activities and sports programs?

- Extracurricular activities and sports programs will be assessed at the beginning of the school year, including any changes or adaptations that may be needed based on the advice of Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health.
- Any extracurricular activities and sports programs will follow the same health and safety guidelines for K-12 school settings, and any additional health and safety guidelines that apply, for example, the [health and safety guidelines for sport and recreation](#) for school sports.
- Students and parents will be updated by their school as this information becomes available.

Will there be music and cooking classes?

- Music classes can continue with adaptations that should be determined by the school's music teacher.
- The health and safety guidelines state that singing and playing woodwind and brass instruments must not occur at this time.

- Cooking classes can continue by meeting the health and safety guidelines, including washing hands before cooking, limiting sharing of equipment and cleaning and disinfecting surfaces between each class.

Will there be recess, gym class and playing on the playground?

- Weather permitting, recess breaks and gym classes will take place outdoors. Students and families should ensure they have the proper clothing for the weather and outdoor activities.
- Playground equipment is okay to use, as long as hands are washed before and after going on the equipment.
- When gym class is indoors, schools will follow the [health and safety guidelines for sport and recreation](#).

Can students use the library?

- Paper-based materials like text books, books and paper handouts are okay to use and share.
- School libraries will be available for students and staff to borrow books and other resources.

Will there be school field trips?

- The health and safety guidelines allow field trips within Yukon and Canada as long as public health and safety guidelines are followed. This includes:
 - outdoor overnight trips if students sleep in their own tent or are only partnered with a family member; and
 - hotel stays, as long as no more than two students are in each room.
- Schools will be assessing any planned school field trips on a case-by-case basis and will provide updates to students and parents directly through school year.
- International field trips are not currently permitted.

Riding the school bus

What health and safety measures will be in place on the school bus?

- School bus services are being adapted to meet the [health and safety guidelines for school bus operations](#) set by Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health. This includes:
 - students will be assigned to the same seat on the bus for their rides to and from school;
 - students will carry a school bus pass with their bus number on it;
 - students will be loaded back to front and offloaded from front to back;
 - there will only be two students per seat this school year, unless they are family members or part of a household bubble with another student who rides the school bus; and
 - there will be fewer students on the school bus than previous years.

Do students wear a mask on the bus?

- Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health has recommended students age 10 or older wear a non-medical mask on the school bus:
 - Masks will be available upon request for students age 10 or older for riding the school bus.
 - While they are recommended for certain situations where physical distancing is not possible, masks are not mandatory.

Is there room on the bus for all students?

- All students who are eligible for the school bus will be able to ride the bus to school.
- Students are eligible for the school bus if:

- they live more than 3.2 kilometres by the nearest passable road from their school; and
 - if they're attending their attendance area school.
- Students who are eligible are being prioritized for busing in the 2020–21 school year, as described above from the [Education Act](#) and [Student Transportation Regulations](#).
- Once we have assessed available space on the bus, we will consider accommodating requests to bus students beyond the eligibility requirements in the following order of priority:
 - Kindergarten to Grade 3 students; then
 - Grade 4 to 7 students who live within 3.2 kilometres of their attendance area school; then
 - students who attend school outside of their attendance area; and finally
 - special requests, including busing to stops other than from home to school and back.

Will there be busing for Whitehorse Grade 10-12 students?

- Yes, students in Grades 10-12 who have a half day of in-class instruction may register for the school bus or for a City of Whitehorse transit pass to support them in travelling to school for their morning or afternoon classes.
- Register at: yukon.ca/en/bus.

How do I know if my child has a seat on the bus?

- Families of eligible students are being notified by email of their child's school bus number.
- If you **do not** receive an email notification, we're still assessing space on the requested school bus route based on the order of priority outlined above to see if we can accommodate your request. For now, you will need to make other arrangements for your child to get to school.

- If your registration was submitted recently and you have not received a notification or response from us, you should make your own arrangements for your child to get to school until your registration or request for busing has been confirmed.
- These registrations are being processed as quickly as possible. As incoming registrations are reviewed, we'll continue to notify eligible families with their school bus numbers and let families requesting school busing know if they can be accommodated on the school bus.

Where do I learn more about busing?

- School bus schedules: yukon.ca/en/school-bus-schedules.
- Registering for the bus and other transportation services: yukon.ca/en/bus.
- Health and safety on the bus: yukon.ca/planning-for-2020-21-school-year.

For more information

- Read the full health and safety guidelines for K-12 school settings set by Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health: yukon.ca/en/guidelines-k-12-school-settings.
- Read the health and safety guidelines for school bus operations set by Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health: yukon.ca/en/guidelines-school-bus-operations.
- Visit Yukon.ca for the latest updates on Planning for the 2020-21 school year: yukon.ca/planning-for-2020-21-school-year.
- Contact your school to learn how they are adjusting their operations to meet the health and safety guidance. Contact information at: yukon.ca/en/education-and-schools/kindergarten-grade-12/directory.
- E-mail the Department of Education at publicschools@gov.yk.ca if you have further questions.