



October 12, 2021

## **Rapid Testing Program in Schools (COVID-19)**

Students and Families,

In order to provide a healthy and safe environment for our staff and students during the COVID-19 pandemic, we continue to develop measures to minimize the impacts.

Education as part of the larger Government of NB response also has a key role to play in protecting our health care system's resources so they can respond to both COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 health issues. As such, we are implementing a rapid testing program in schools.

The rollout and implementation of the plan will begin on October 12 and be done gradually within our school system. Some schools will begin to put these measures more quickly than others but please rest assured that in the coming days or weeks all schools will be able to benefit from these new measures when needed.

It is likely that you have several questions about the implementation of this new process. Please see the attached document for answers to many anticipated questions.

If you have any other questions, please send a message to [EdCommunication@gnb.ca](mailto:EdCommunication@gnb.ca)

Please rest assured that the health and safety of your children remains the priority of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, school districts and Public Health.

Thank you for your valuable collaboration,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George Daley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "y".

George Daley  
Deputy Minister

Attachment

## **Frequently Asked Questions COVID-19 Rapid Testing Families**

### **What happens when my child is identified as a close contact of a COVID-19 positive case?**

Beginning October 12 in a gradual matter, unvaccinated students who are identified as a close contact of a confirmed case will be provided with a supply of rapid tests, depending on the last possible exposure date to the confirmed case, along with instructions.

Tests may be sent home with students or picked up by parents as soon as they are available at a site identified by the district, depending upon when the school is notified of a confirmed case. Districts will communicate with families via email or voicemail to convey instructions.

### **How long will those identified as a close contact be required have to stay home?**

Unvaccinated students will be required to self-isolate while they take their first two rapid tests. Unless otherwise advised by Public Health, students will return to school once they provide two negative tests at school and if they have no symptoms. Depending on the time period determined, students will be required to test daily and submit their negative results to continue attending school.

### **How do we use the rapid tests?**

It is recommended that you test your child as soon as you receive the tests and then perform a second test the next morning. The child will return to school with their two proofs of negative tests stored in a container and present them to the designated person upon arrival at school. It is not necessary to present the negative test results to get on the bus.

Testing should be done under parental or guardian supervision. They are responsible for reading the test result before returning the student to school.

Instructions on how to test and on the period of time required for testing will be provided with the test kits.

If your child tests positive, you should immediately isolate and book an online PCR test with Public Health. You will need to indicate the request for a PCR test is following a positive POCT and that the child is a student in order to be prioritized.

### **How long will we need to test at home?**

Testing kits will have an appropriate supply of rapid tests, depending on the last possible exposure date to the confirmed case. Public Health will notify families whose children are identified as close contacts of the date until which they will be required to test daily. Students will be required to bring in the negative test, stored in a container, as proof every day. Instructions for testing will also be provided.

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**What happens if my child tests positive?**

Anyone who tests positive, or has even one symptom of COVID-19, is asked to self-diagnose and make an appointment on the Public Health website and follow the Public Health recommendations. If the rapid test is positive, you will need to indicate this on the Public Health website. Click on the online request tab to be tested for COVID-19 and follow the instructions. When entering patient information, when asked "Is the caller in a priority group?", please select teachers and school personnel so that the request will be prioritized even if the caller is a student and then finalize the request.

The school should also be contacted for the tracking of absences and the COVID-19 tracking process.

**My child is fully vaccinated, but was identified as a close contact. What should we do in this case?**

Students who are fully vaccinated and have no symptoms will follow direction from Public Health. In line with current Public Health guidance, those who are fully vaccinated are to return to school and must self-monitor for a prescribed period of time. If they have at least **one** symptom, they must stay home, self-isolate and get a PCR test with Public Health.

**My child has only received one dose of the vaccine. Are they required to take the rapid tests?**

Yes. Students who have only received one dose of the vaccine are not considered fully vaccinated and are therefore subject to the same rapid screening procedures as unvaccinated children.

**My child, age 12 and over, is unvaccinated, can he/she participate in after-school activities during the testing period?**

Students who are able to be vaccinated (born in 2009 or before or who have received an exemption for medical reasons) must be fully vaccinated to participate in all extracurricular and intramural activities, held outdoors or indoors. Students born between July 1 and December 31, 2009 will be entitled to an exception to this requirement until October 31, 2021, when they must have received two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to be allowed to continue participating in these activities. **Unvaccinated students over 12 may NOT participate or engage in any form in extracurricular and intramural activities, indoors or outdoors. Please refer to the Healthy and Safe Schools plan.**

**My child, under 12, is unvaccinated. Can he/she participate in after-school activities during the testing period?**

Yes, they can participate in extracurricular or intramural activities, indoors or outdoors, unless there is a Public Health advisory in effect, such as the circuit breaker measures affecting certain areas.

**Do I have to prove my child tested negative, if so, how?**

Yes, the student must present their negative tests every day during the testing period (stored in a container) to a designated staff person at school. In the event that the student does not have their tests with them, the school will not perform a swab on a student. Written consent will be required if the child does a **self-administered test** school if a cartridge is lost. This **may** be an option for a student if this consent is received. Otherwise, the student will have to return home until the negative tests can be provided or until the end of the isolation period.

**If I am rapid testing, do I still need to schedule a day 10 PCR test?**

No.

**My child has been identified as a close contact, but school is still closed/has still been told to isolate. Why?**

Families should be prepared that outbreak management decisions, and contact tracing, will continue to be made on a case-by-case basis. This means students may still have to learn from home for periods of time throughout the coming year as per Public Health directives or because of operational reasons, such as lack of staff.

The POCT tests aim to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on both school staff and students.

**Do I need to provide proof of vaccination?**

EECD works closely with Public Health and therefore knows the COVID-19 vaccination status of students aged 12 and over.

However, some data may be missing or incorrect. In these cases, full proof of vaccination may be required.

**What happens if my fully vaccinated child develops COVID-19 symptoms?**

Any development of one symptom amongst fully vaccinated students should be communicated to Public Health for a PCR test. Isolation should begin.

**What happens if the result on the test kit fades before sending to school?**

If negative, continue to send the cartridge to school even if the result has faded. Personnel at the school will be aware that sometimes the results fade within minutes and will trust that the result was negative. If the result is positive appears, please keep your child at home and contact Public Health for further instructions, including a PCR test.