



Frequently Asked Questions:

N.J. Macpherson School Outbreak and Isolation Guidance

In the case of shared custody of a child who is identified as a contact of the COVID-19 outbreak at N.J. Macpherson school, do both households need to isolate, or only the household where the child is currently staying?

Any students, staff or volunteers of N.J. Macpherson School must stay home and self-isolate for 14 days as of May 1, 2021.

If a student has been staying at both residences and attended the school during the exposure period of April 26-29, then all unvaccinated household members of N.J. Macpherson school will be required to isolate for 14 days until public health can complete its investigation and determine the extent of exposure.

Household members who are fully vaccinated (two weeks after your second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine) can safely work, and carry on with other normal activities while being mindful of taking care to physically distance and wear a mask if no one in the household is symptomatic or identified as a close contact of COVID-19. Please also remember that the OCPHO is reminding people to adhere to gathering restrictions: Indoor household gatherings must be limited to no more than the five regular visitors to a maximum of 10 people in the household at any given time.

Are fully vaccinated people who are not listed as contacts of the N.J. Macpherson school outbreak able to go about their day-to-day activities?

People who were not listed as school contacts or who do not live in the same household as contacts are able to go about their day-to-day activities. As the number of COVID-19 cases increase in the Northwest Territories, we ask that everyone follow the public health advice that we know works to stop the spread of COVID-19. This includes:

- Self-isolate whenever required.
- Prioritize physical distancing of at least six feet (two metres).
- Wear non-medical masks in all public places.
- If you're feeling even a little sick, stay home.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Keep coughs and sneezes to yourself.
- Call your health centre or public health unit at the first sign of any sickness to get tested for COVID-19.



Some other important things to keep in mind to protect you and your loved ones from COVID-19:

- Indoor household gatherings must be limited to no more than the five regular visitors to a maximum of 10 people in the household at any given time.
- Keep gatherings small.

Are early learning and child care programs – such as daycares – considered essential services and would not be part of extracurricular activities that need to close due to the outbreak declared at N.J. Macpherson school in Yellowknife?

The Chief Public Health Officer (CPHO) is recommending early learning and child care programs in the NWT stay open during the COVID-19 public health emergency wherever possible.

Child care is considered an essential service. The continued availability of licensed early learning and child care programs is critical for important to support essential workers in the NWT in continuing to provide services to residents of the NWT throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency, including healthcare services.

However, the following Yellowknife licensed family dayhomes have indicated that they are impacted and therefore will be closed for 14 days:

1. Bright Beginnings
2. Amanda's House
3. ABC Dayhome
4. Stepping Stones
5. Tiny Treasures
6. Little Walkers
7. Mes Petits Amis

YWCA after school program and Montessori (CASA and after school) located at NJ MacPherson are closed as in accordance with OCPHO direction.

If my two weeks post-vaccination date is the week of May 10-16, can I return to work next week or must I self-isolate the full two weeks as I was not fully vaccinated at the time of exposure?

Any students, staff or volunteers of N.J. Macpherson School must stay home and self-isolate for 14 days as of May 1, 2021. Because COVID-19 passes so easily from one household member to another, the NWT's OCPHO advises household members who cannot safely self-isolate away from the contact to also isolate.

Only household members who are fully vaccinated as of May 1st (two weeks after your second dose of COVID-19 vaccine) may safely return to work. If you are a household member of a contact and are not yet fully vaccinated, you will be required to complete the full 14 days of self-isolation.



The OCPHO is suspending all organized child and youth extra-curricular activities until further notice due to the outbreak declared at N.J. Macpherson school in Yellowknife? What activities does this include?

Child and youth activities refer to extra-curricular activities that are organized through schools or other community groups that have regularly scheduled meeting times. The OCPHO also advises against more spontaneous group gatherings at this time. This refers to Yellowknife only. This does not include daycare and day homes for anyone NOT required to self-isolate.

Who is considered a COVID-19 contact?

Contacts are people who had interactions with a person with a COVID-19 infection. This puts them at higher risk of acquiring COVID-19 themselves. People who live in the same home as someone with COVID-19 are at increased risk of developing COVID-19 and are a contact. Other situations like being in the same car or room, or being close to someone with COVID-19 for at least 10 minutes means the person is a contact and has a high chance of developing COVID-19.

Sometimes, out of caution, it is necessary to consider all those who were at the same particular location or event as a person with COVID-19 as contacts because there just isn't enough information to confirm one way or the other.

Why do contacts have to isolate and how long must they isolate?

Most COVID-19 infections develop between 3 and 8 days after an exposure to the virus, but sometimes it may take up to 14 days after exposure to develop COVID-19. Contacts must isolate for a full 14 days from the last time they were exposed to a person in the communicable stage of the infection. Isolation for 14 days means 14 full 24-hour periods. If a person's last exposure was on April 19, 2021 at noon, for example, they can stop isolating on May 3 at noon.

Why do household members have to self-isolate too?

Because COVID-19 passes so easily from one household member to another, the NWT OCPHO advises household members who cannot safely self-isolate away from the contact to also isolate. People living in the same home as a contact have a higher risk of developing COVID-19 themselves. The likelihood of household members of people identified as "contacts" developing COVID-19 is high and risks ongoing transmission of COVID-19 to others. For this reason, we ask household members who cannot safely self-isolate from the contact to also isolate.



What does safely self-isolating at home mean?

People who are contacts should isolate in a way that they cannot pass infection on to others. If they are staying in the same home as others, this means contacts should:

- have a separate bedroom
- not be in the same room as others at the same time, and should not interact with others as they move through a home
- use a dedicated bathroom that no one else uses. If this is not possible, the shared bathroom should be frequently cleaned and disinfected with [household cleaners](#). Please see GNWT guidance on cleaning surfaces, [available here](#).
- Also, the contact and other household members should wear [non-medical masks](#) to further reduce the risk of transmission within the home. Please see the GNWT guidance on non-medical masks, [available here](#).

If household members of the contact can consistently meet the above criteria they do not have to self-isolate as long as the contact has 2 negative tests – an initial test and a second test 48 hours later. Public health will inform the household when they no longer need to isolate.

If household members cannot meet these criteria they must isolate for the same duration as the contact - they end the isolation when the contact ends their isolation. If a contact develops symptoms of COVID-19, or develops COVID-19, further assessments are required to determine when the person with symptoms (or with COVID-19) and their household can end self-isolation. If the contact or anyone in the household develops symptoms please stay at home and call public health for guidance.

What if I was a household member of a contact, but the contact left to isolate somewhere else?

If a contact is living with their family, and they weren't "safely self-isolating" and the contact leaves to self-isolate in another location, public health will recommend that the contact have a COVID-19 test 48 hours after they left the home. Current evidence says that COVID-19 can pass from person to person starting about two days before a positive COVID-19 test. So, if a contact leaves a home and their test 48 hours later is negative, the household members where the contact was first isolating can end their self-isolation after confirmation of a negative test. The contact must continue to isolate to complete their 14 days. Public health will contact families and give advice as to when they may end self-isolation.

Does vaccination change the duration that a contact or household member of a contact (who cannot safely self-isolate, as above) must self-isolate for?

COVID-19 vaccines are very effective, preventing about 90- 95% of COVID-19 infections. However, even vaccinated people some risk of developing COVID-19 infections. A vaccinated household member of a person with COVID-19 might have about a 2% chance of developing COVID-19 (compared to 20% in an unvaccinated household member). At present, OCPHO feels that residual risk is still too high and does not recommend changes in the way vaccinated contacts or their household members must isolate. As effective vaccines prevent more COVID-19 infections, the hope is that there will be progressively fewer situations where vaccinated contacts and their households need to self-isolate.