

April 13, 2022

To school administrators, staff, students and families in Simcoe Muskoka:

**Re: Indoor Masking Recommendation and Other Layers of Protection**

Simcoe Muskoka is in a sixth wave of COVID-19 driven by the Omicron BA.2 variant. We know this as we have seen an increase in case counts, outbreaks, hospitalizations, and detection of virus in wastewater. Although the province lifted COVID-19 restrictions and masking mandates, the pandemic is not over and we cannot let our guard down. As I stated in my March 23 [special statement](#) to the community, it is still very important that you continue to take precautions to protect yourself, your family, and your community, with the goal of reducing severe illness and hospitalization and to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in this sixth wave.

I strongly recommend that you continue to wear a mask in all indoor public spaces, including schools. Masks should be three-layered, well-fitted and cover the nose, mouth and chin.

Continue daily screening, stay home if you are sick and self-isolate if you have symptoms of COVID-19 or have tested positive.

Vaccination remains one of the most important tools to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and protect ourselves and our community from not only this wave but future waves. It is critical to stay up to date with your vaccination by receiving all doses recommended. As COVID-19 continues to spread, getting a booster dose if you are eligible and especially if you are at high risk, is very important. It is your best defense against severe illness and hospitalization.

These actions can reduce the spread of COVID-19 and school absenteeism and help keep our school communities healthy. Each preventive measure adds a layer of protection for yourself and others:

- [Get vaccinated for COVID-19](#) and stay up to date with all eligible vaccination doses.
- Wear a well-fitted mask when in indoor public spaces, like school, especially when two metres of physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Complete the [COVID-19 School and Child Care screening](#) before going to school every day.
- Practice good hand hygiene.
- Stay home if you are sick or unwell.

Thank you for your continued efforts to support the health and well-being of school communities in Simcoe Muskoka. Visit the health unit's website for more information at [smdhu.org/COVID-19](https://smdhu.org/COVID-19) or contact Health Connection at 705-721-7520 (toll free 1-877-721-7520), Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Sincerely,

**ORIGINAL Signed By:**

Charles Gardner, MD, CCFP, MHSc, FRCPC  
Medical Officer of Health

❑ **Barrie:**  
15 Sperling Drive  
Barrie, ON  
L4M 6K9  
705-721-7520  
FAX: 705-721-1495

❑ **Collingwood:**  
280 Pretty River Pkwy.  
Collingwood, ON  
L9Y 4J5  
705-445-0804  
FAX: 705-445-6498

❑ **Cookstown:**  
2-25 King Street S.  
Cookstown, ON  
L0L 1L0  
705-458-1103  
FAX: 705-458-0105

❑ **Gravenhurst:**  
2-5 Pineridge Gate  
Gravenhurst, ON  
P1P 1Z3  
705-684-9090  
FAX: 705-684-9887

❑ **Huntsville:**  
34 Chaffey St.  
Huntsville, ON  
P1H 1K1  
705-789-8813  
FAX: 705-789-7245

❑ **Midland:**  
A-925 Hugel Ave.  
Midland, ON  
L4R 1X8  
705-526-9324  
FAX: 705-526-1513

❑ **Orillia:**  
120-169 Front St. S.  
Orillia, ON  
L3V 4S8  
705-325-9565  
FAX: 705-325-2091