

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

January 14, 2022

NWHU Supportive of Schools Reopening

Northwestern Health Unit's Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Kit Young Hoon fully supports the decision for in-person learning to resume on January 17, 2022. "The benefits of in-person learning far outweigh the risks at a population level. It has been shown that in-person learning can positively impact our students' health and well-being", says Dr. Kit Young Hoon. "Although the Omicron variant is highly transmissible, the risk of serious illness and hospitalization is not high in our school-aged population", Dr. Young Hoon says.

All students and staff must complete the [School Screening Tool](#) each day before school. "Not every symptom requires a full isolation period or isolation of family members. It is important to read the instructions carefully if you fail the screen", says Dr. Young Hoon.

The health unit will be notified by schools when there is approximately 30% absenteeism in a school due to illness. This is a requirement that has been in place for many years and schools are familiar with the process. Upon notice of high absenteeism rates, Northwestern Health Unit notifies parents/guardians and works with the school to ensure all infection prevention and control measures are in place. Parents/guardians and schools do not need to report positive test results to public health, instead they should visit www.ontario.ca/exposed for information on what to do next.

Being fully-vaccinated is highly effective at preventing hospitalization and death from COVID-19. Parents and legal guardians of those aged 5-11 are encouraged to get their children vaccinated. "In some of our communities, we have coverage rates in the 5-11 year old age group of nearly 60%", says Dr. Young Hoon. As a region, nearly 50% of 5-11 year olds have had their first dose – a number that continues to grow daily.

For more information on screening, what to do if you have symptoms, or booking a vaccination appointment, visit: www.nwhu.on.ca/covid19.

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