



Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Fall is here and we are encouraging you to join us in taking action to reduce the spread of flu, COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses in our school communities. Our goal is to protect the health of our children and minimize the spread of illness.

Hamilton Public Health Services recommends taking the **following actions to help avoid getting – and spreading – respiratory illnesses:**

 <p><b>Get your flu shot and stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccination</b></p>	<p>Getting a flu shot and staying up-to-date with COVID-19 shots can help protect yourself and others from getting ill and <b>may help reduce symptoms and the length of infection if you do get sick.</b></p>
 <p><b>Stay at home when you're sick</b></p>	<p>Viruses <b>spread more easily in group settings</b>, such as businesses, schools and nursing homes.</p> <p>Make sure to <b>screen for respiratory symptoms daily</b> and stay home when feeling sick.</p>
 <p><b>Strongly recommend individuals wear a well-fitted mask in all indoor settings</b></p>	<p><b>Children 2 to 5 years of age should only wear a mask with supervision</b>, and in situations where they can put it on and take it off themselves.</p>
 <p><b>Wash your hands often</b></p>	<p>Even after getting the flu shot, washing with soap and water for <b>at least 15 seconds</b> helps keep the virus from spreading</p> <p>If soap and water are not available, use a <b>hand sanitizer</b> (gel or wipes) with at least <b>70% alcohol</b></p>
 <p><b>Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze</b></p>	<p>Use a <b>tissue</b> and <b>throw it out</b> rather than putting it in your pocket, on a desk or table</p> <p>If you don't have a tissue, cough into your <b>upper sleeve</b></p>

 <p><b>Don't touch your face</b></p>	<p>The flu virus spreads when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk and <b>droplets enter your body</b> through your <b>eyes, nose or mouth</b></p>
 <p><b>Clean (and disinfect) surfaces and shared items</b></p>	<p><b>Viruses can live for 24 to 48 hours on hard surfaces</b> such as countertops, toys, door handles, computer keyboards and phones</p>

**It is more important than ever to reduce the spread of flu, COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses.**

Children are more vulnerable to complications and hospitalization from respiratory illnesses because their immune systems are still developing, and their airways are small and more easily blocked. Parents, caregivers, and those who work closely with children are encouraged to take steps to help protect the children they interact with.

Hamilton Public Health Services recommends getting the flu vaccine early because it takes **two weeks** to take effect. Flu shots became available at over 160 locations across Hamilton as of November 1, 2022.

COVID-19 booster shots are also available widely: [www.hamilton.ca/GetYourVaccine](http://www.hamilton.ca/GetYourVaccine). People 5 years and older do not need to leave time in between getting their COVID-19 and flu shots.

**Where to get the flu vaccine**

Visit [www.hamilton.ca/flu](http://www.hamilton.ca/flu) for an interactive map of **flu clinics** available in the City of Hamilton.

**Note:** children 6 months to under 2 years old need to get their flu shot from a doctor or nurse practitioner. Children 2 years and older can get their flu shot from a doctor, nurse practitioner, or from a pharmacist.

We appreciate your continued cooperation in helping fight against respiratory illnesses and keeping our kids healthy.

If you have questions, please contact your healthcare provider, or Hamilton Public Health Services (905-540-5250).