

January 12, 2024

Dear Families,

As you may be aware, this is the time of year when respiratory viruses such as influenza, RSV, COVID-19, and others are spreading in New Brunswick and elsewhere. In addition to those viruses, we are seeing increased infections from the streptococcus bacteria (Group A Strep).

All these additional infections also add more strain to the health-care system. Fortunately, we know what we can do to reduce our risk of getting infected and passing on our infections to others:

- **Vaccines:** I would encourage you to make sure you and your children are up to date on their immunizations, including vaccines for COVID-19 and influenza.
- **Illness exclusions:** Stay home if you have:
  - One of the following: fever, or a new or worsening cough;  
OR
  - Two or more of the following: difficulty breathing, sore throat, runny nose/congestion, headache, new onset of fatigue or purple markings on the fingers and toes of children;  
OR
  - Symptoms of gastro-intestinal illness, such as vomiting or diarrhea.

Public Health recommends that those who are sick should stay home until they are feeling better, are fever-free for at least 24 hours without using fever-reducing medication, free of vomiting and diarrhea for at least 48 hours (if present) and are well enough to participate fully in all activities.

- **Masks:** Masking remains a personal choice. Given the current situation, consider wearing a mask, particularly when indoors in a crowded public space. In addition, consider wearing a mask if you are recovering from an infection and you still have some symptoms but you're returning to your usual activities.
- **Hand Hygiene:** Frequent hand-washing with soap and water, or alcohol-based sanitizer, can help prevent infections. This is especially important before preparing food or before eating, after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, or after going to the washroom.

The more measures you take, the more you can reduce your risk of getting infected. I encourage you to play your part to stay healthy this winter season. Please visit: [www.gnb.ca/vaccines](http://www.gnb.ca/vaccines)

Kind regards,



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