



COVID-19: Frequently asked questions for families who are often at CHEO

What is Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

It is a new strain of coronavirus identified in Wuhan, China in late 2019. It has now spread across the world. The World Health Organization has named the illness caused by this new coronavirus COVID-19 and has declared the outbreak a pandemic.

What you should know

- CHEO is a safe place for you and your child to come for assessments by your primary care team. We are taking all necessary precautions to keep you safe.
- Children who are immunocompromised or who have chronic medical conditions may be at higher risk of developing complications if they do get COVID-19.
- Washing your hands often using soap and water for 20 seconds helps prevent the spread of infection. You can also use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Practice physical distancing: you should maintain a distance of 2 arms length from others.
- Your child should continue to take their regular medications as prescribed by their primary care team, unless specifically instructed otherwise.

Always visit cheo.on.ca/COVID-19 for our latest updates.



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Frequently Asked Questions

Preventing the spread of infection

How can I prevent the spread of COVID-19?

- Wash your hands often using soap and water for 20 seconds, or with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. This is especially important after touching surfaces or after contact with other people outside the home. Always wash your hands before eating, drinking or touching your face, eyes or nose.
- Avoid touching your face, nose and eyes.
- Avoid close contact with people who have a fever or cough.
- Practice cough etiquette by keeping a distance from other people, coughing and sneezing into your sleeve or a tissue or a respiratory mask, and washing your hands often.

Are there any extra precautions that my child or I should be taking?

Encourage your child to wash or sanitize their hands frequently. Avoid having your child be in close contact with anyone who has symptoms of a respiratory infection that could represent COVID-19. Be vigilant for signs of infection in your child.

Should my child wear a face mask when in public?

Do:

- Wear a mask if you or your child has respiratory symptoms (including fever or cough) and are at the hospital for assessment. This will help prevent spreading the virus to others.
- Wear a mask if your care team has advised you to for other reasons.

Don't:

- Wear a mask if you aren't having respiratory symptoms. There's no current evidence that wearing one in public spaces will help avoid infection. Hand washing and social distancing are more effective.

Should my child avoid public places such as shopping malls, public transit and playgrounds?

Yes, physical distancing is encouraged! That means avoiding crowded environments like shopping malls and playgrounds. In crowded situations that cannot be avoided, take extra precautions like frequent handwashing. Physical distancing reduces the chance of being coughed on or coming into contact with surfaces another person has coughed on. If you have alcohol-based hand sanitizer, carry it with you to use when soap and water are not available.

We are now using the term physical distancing rather than social distancing. We can still be social (by phone, Facetime, texting) without being physically close to each other. Learn more on the [Ottawa Public Health website](#)



Should we cancel our upcoming trip or vacation?

Yes. At this time, it is recommended that any upcoming trips or vacations be cancelled until further notice.

If a family member in our household is sick, should they be in contact with my child who has complex care needs? What procedures should we follow?

If someone in your household is sick or symptomatic, keep them isolated in a smaller area of the house and do not eat at the same table. As much as possible, keep them separated from the child with complex care needs. You should also wear a mask if you can, wash your hands often and especially before preparing food or providing care to your child.

This is the same procedure that the general public should follow, but families with complex care needs must be more vigilant about following these steps.

Medical questions

Is my child immunocompromised?

Immunocompromised children have weaker immune systems. A weak immune system could be caused by many different medical conditions or medications. Some examples include children who have:

- had a solid organ transplant (i.e. heart, kidney, lung, liver, intestinal)
- had a bone marrow transplant
- cancer
- congenital or primary immunodeficiency
- HIV/AIDS
- rheumatological disease
- gastrointestinal disease
- severe burns

And those who are:

- taking selective immunomodulators (i.e. anti-TNF agents, azathioprine, MMF and all immunosuppressive agents)
- taking long-term steroid therapy
- in a severely malnourished state

If you are unsure if your child is immunocompromised, please check with your primary CHEO care team.



Is my child at higher risk of getting COVID-19?

There is still a lot being learned about COVID-19. At this time, serious illness in children appears to be less common than it is in adults. It is not yet clear whether children with underlying or chronic medical conditions are at greater risk of being infected with COVID-19, or of serious illness if they get the infection. Based on what is known about the influenza virus, it would not be unexpected for immunocompromised children, or children with an underlying chronic medical condition (i.e. chronic lung disease) to be at increased risk of complications from COVID-19.

How do I know if my child has COVID-19?

Your child may have COVID-19 if they have some or all of the following symptoms:

- fever
- cough or sneezing
- sore throat
- difficulty breathing or fast breathing
- body aches
- headache
- chills
- fatigue
- diarrhea and vomiting
- runny or stuffy nose that progresses to one of the above symptoms

While fever can be the main symptom in immunocompromised children, not all children with COVID-19 will have a fever. For children who have a runny or stuffy nose you should be most concerned about a possible COVID-19 infection if other symptoms develop. *It is not yet known if immunocompromised children with a COVID-19 infection have different symptoms.*

Should my child be tested for COVID-19?

If your child is immunocompromised or medically complex, contact your primary care team at CHEO to determine if an in-person test is required and where the safest place to go is. Generally, kids with complex medical conditions should not go to the Brewer Arena Community Assessment Centre. We believe that proper assessment of a medically complex child is best done in their regular hospital where things like their usual respiratory rate and oxygen saturations are easily available for comparison.

Currently (March 25, 2020), Brewer Assessment Centre is testing people who have respiratory symptoms (fever and/or cough/trouble breathing/sore throat) if they have either travelled outside Canada or have been in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19. At CHEO, we are testing any child or youth who is ill enough to be admitted for respiratory infection regardless of travel history.

Should I come to the hospital if I think my child has COVID-19?

If your child has mild symptoms of COVID-19 contact your primary care team at CHEO before coming. They will help you determine if your child needs to be seen and where you should go.



You should come to the hospital right away if your child has the following symptoms:

- fast breathing or trouble breathing
- bluish skin color
- not drinking enough fluids
- not waking up or not interacting
- being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- fever with a rash

In an emergency please call an ambulance and tell the emergency services team that you are concerned your child may have a COVID-19 infection.

If my child is diagnosed with COVID-19, how long will they be sick?

There is still a lot to be learned about COVID-19. Mild cases tend to recover after about 2 weeks; for severe cases admitted to hospital it can take 3-6 weeks. Children with weakened immune systems may be sick for a longer period of time than other children with many types of infections. Each child will respond differently, so we can't predict how long someone will be sick for.

Should my child continue on their immunosuppressive medications?

Always continue to take your regular medications as prescribed, unless your primary care team at CHEO tells you otherwise. Make sure you have enough extra medication and supplies on hand, in case you need to stay home for a prolonged period of time.

Coming to CHEO

Is it safe for my child to come to CHEO during the current outbreak?

Yes! CHEO is taking all necessary precautions to keep you and your child safe if you need to come.

We are:

- Cancelling non-urgent face to face appointments
- We are still seeing patients in MDU when medically necessary
- Doing virtual (phone/video) visits where possible
- Restricting visiting - only one caregiver can accompany their child to an appointment or to the Emergency Department.

Caregivers coming to CHEO with children with complex medical needs should identify themselves to the first screener you encounter. We have added physical distancing markers throughout the building and there will be plenty of space for you to physically distance while in a waiting area.

Always visit our website cheo.on.ca/COVID-19 for the latest information before you come.



What is the current caregiver presence policy? What if my child is ill and requires hospitalization, and then I as their caregiver also fall ill?

Our parent/caregiver presence policy is:

- ONE family caregiver will be allowed to accompany children and youth while at CHEO, whether in clinic, emergency department, or as an inpatient. We are screening all caregivers as they enter for signs of illness.
- Children and youth who are admitted as inpatients may have two designated family caregivers, though only ONE may be on site at a time, including overnights. For example, one family caregiver may accompany their child during the day and another stay with the child overnight, or they can swap out in shifts throughout the day, etc.

If their primary caregiver is sick and not allowed to be physically with their child, know that we have supports and other options in place. You can designate another caregiver to take your place and be with your child in clinic, the emergency department or as an inpatient.

Starting Monday, we will have iPads available for sign language, interpretation and videoconferencing between caregivers, interpreters and children and youth staying at CHEO.

Should I reschedule my upcoming routine appointment?

All non-urgent face-to-face clinic appointments are being cancelled. Medically necessary appointments, tests and procedures (bloodwork, medical imaging) will continue. We are ramping up our ability to offer virtual visits by telephone or video. If your appointment is cancelled, your care team will contact you to reschedule at a later date.

Please contact your primary care team at CHEO for questions regarding your upcoming appointments.

Will my child or youth's treatment be impacted by cancelled appointments?

We are not stopping any therapies, such as chemotherapy. We will continue to work hard to keep medically necessary appointments, tests, procedures and treatments running safely.

To support this, we've created a Redeployment Centre that allows us to put resources where they're most needed.

If my child requires assessment for symptoms other than COVID-19, what should we do?

Continue to follow your primary CHEO care team's instructions and recommendations for getting your child assessed, as you would do normally. For example, if your child is on medication that causes them to have a low white blood cell count and they develop a fever, you should still go to the hospital for assessment and let the primary care team know about your child's symptoms.



What if the province orders a lockdown and mandates people to stay in their homes? Will we be able to get to the hospital?

Even in countries that have ordered lockdowns, people have still been able to travel for medically necessary reasons. CHEO continues to be open for emergency care.

What is CHEO doing to keep kids, caregivers and staff safe and prevent the spread of infection?

At CHEO, our staff and medical staff are following the most current infection prevention and control precautions. We are doing everything we can to ensure everyone's safety while being cared for at CHEO. All kids, caregivers and staff are being screened for symptoms of illness before entering the building. Staff or caregivers who have symptoms are not permitted to come into the building.

All staff members returning from international travel are required to self-isolate and not come in to work for a period of 14 days. We are following this PHAC guideline, and are also screening all staff before entering the building to ensure that any staff who are unwell and/or have travelled are not in the building.

How will ventilators be allocated? We have not seen any pediatric shortage of ventilators during this pandemic, in any country.

At CHEO we never allocate resources based on developmental status, underlying condition or medical complexities. This is a fundamental principle at CHEO and this will not change.

I use the CHEO KidCare Pharmacy. Can I still pick up prescriptions? How can I practice physical distance while doing so?

One way we are putting the safety of children, youth, families, staff and medical staff first is by reducing the volume of people inside our pharmacy. Instead of coming into our KidCare Pharmacy to pick up your order, we are offering convenient delivery and pick-up options that promote physical distancing:

- Children, youth and caregivers can have prescription packages delivered right to their unit. Just ask your nurse to call our pharmacy and arrange for this service.
- For families in the community, we're offering contactless pick-up. Simply call in your order to the KidCare Pharmacy at 613-737-2316, wait for a call saying your order is ready and then drive up to our main entrance. Once you're outside, a friendly delivery person will run it out to the trunk of your car.

Other questions



Should my child continue to get their vaccines on schedule?

Yes! All routine and toddler immunizations should continue as scheduled. This is one more way you can keep your child safe and prevent another virus. Please call your family physician to see if they are scheduling specific times for vulnerable populations to get their vaccines.

What should I do if I am unwell myself, or my child's sibling becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 infection?

Contact your family doctor or pediatrician. Practice physical distancing at home as much as possible, and have the entire family wash their hands often. The latest guidelines for who should be tested for COVID-19 can be found on the Ministry of Health or [Ottawa Public Health](#) websites.

What should I do if a member of my household has recently returned from travel outside of Canada?

People returning from travel outside of Canada must self-isolate for 14 days. During that time period your child should avoid close contact with this person as much as possible. Visit the [Ottawa Public Health website](#) for more detailed self-isolation instructions.

Should I or my teen who is immunocompromised go to work?

Always follow [public health guidelines](#) and practice physical distancing when appropriate. This may include avoiding work environments that involve contact with large groups of people. It is recommended that you or your teen who is immunocompromised try to work from home as much as possible.

Should I cancel my child's RN/RPN/PSW care? What if this care is cancelled, how can I avoid burnout as the primary caregiver?

At this point of time, the LHIN recommends that families struggling with whether or not to cancel RN, RPN or PSW care should contact their LHIN coordinator directly. They will discuss the risks and benefits with you and provide information to help you make that decision.

When is ADP (assisted device program) going to be considered an essential service?

The Empowered Kids Ontario team has been having discussions about keeping staff available to escalate this issue. In the meantime, Social Workers are available to help you access bridge funding. We are working closely with the CHEO foundation on this.

If your child needs a chair size change for their seating and mobility, at this time you will need to pay or delay access.



For parents that have to take time off work due to COVID-19 and are awaiting EI, are there funds we can access?

The Government of Canada is working to add more programs and supports. To help families navigate these new resources, our Social Workers are working to simplify and help you navigate this info. If you're unsure, reach out to your CHEO Social Worker.

How can my family and I look after our mental health right now?

It's important for the entire family to develop and maintain a routine for sleep, meal times, play time, exercise, screen time and more.

Also structure and limit the time you spend watching or reading news. It's important to stay informed, but if you feel yourself getting overwhelmed take a step back and limit the time you spend watching it. Instead, create good times and find games or activities to do as a family!

Plan ahead: have a plan for who will do the groceries and errands for you, mark down when you would need to renew prescriptions and equipment, and have a backup plan for if anyone gets sick. Make sure to have all necessary documents, instructions and care plans for your child in case you get sick and someone else is temporarily looking after them.

Self-isolation and physical (social) distancing are important steps to contain the virus, but that doesn't mean you are alone.

If you need additional support or have questions, reach out to your CHEO care team, social worker or other support. We are here to help you.