



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

# Back to School During the Pandemic

A message from Dr. Unjali Malhotra, Office of the Chief Medical Officer

As the mother of a child who is under 12 I'm among the many parents and other caregivers feeling concerned as my child returns to school.

We all want our children to be safe, happy and healthy. They need to see their friends and teachers, spend time in libraries and playgrounds, and take part in all the wonderful things that make up the school experience.

On the other hand, we know that not everyone has chosen to get vaccinated, and that to protect our children, and have "community immunity," everyone around them who can get vaccinated needs to do so.



## WHAT WE KNOW

- **Small children (under 12) are not yet eligible to be vaccinated.** To protect them, everyone around them should be fully vaccinated (two shots, plus two weeks after the second shot)
- **Spread of COVID-19 at schools has been low.** Your school has likely provided you with a plan to ensure the safest possible environment for our children. You may see things like clearly marked sanitizer stations, staggered play times, virtual assemblies, and smaller crowds at sporting events.
- **Following public health guidelines helps.** The current mask guidelines for schools in BC require staff for Kindergarten to Grade 12, as well as students from Grades 4 to 12, to wear masks in all indoor areas, including at their desks and on school busses. Visitors are also required to wear masks.

Little children can only remember to do so much, so parents and their teachers will have to keep reminding them to wash their hands and wear their masks. What's more, we'll need to be diligent about keeping them home if they get sick.

## HELPFUL LINKS

- COVID-19 Safe Schools: [gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/covid-19-safe-schools](https://gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/covid-19-safe-schools)
- Public health communicable disease guidance for K-12 schools: [bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID\\_public\\_guidance/Guidance-k-12-schools.pdf](https://bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_public_guidance/Guidance-k-12-schools.pdf)