

Ministry of Health

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August 31, 2021

MEMORANDUM

TO: Medical Officers of Health and Associate Medical Officers of Health

RE: Fully Vaccinated Individuals/Previously Positive Case and Contact Management Strategies

As more of Ontario’s population becomes fully vaccinated and as we enter the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic – our contact management practices have shifted, but continue to be monitored based on emerging evidence. Vaccination is highly effective for preventing SARS-CoV-2 infection and serious outcomes when infection occurs, including against the Delta variant. However, recent data from the Delta variant shows that when breakthrough cases occur, fully vaccinated individuals have similar levels of infectiousness as in unvaccinated cases. The Delta variant is more transmissible and virulent than previous strains and is the dominant strain in Ontario, likely making up over 90% of new cases.

To respond to this emerging evidence, we are strongly encouraging all health units to modify current practices to best address the potential risk of secondary transmission from breakthrough cases and the emergence of vaccine/immune escape variants. If your health unit has not done so already, we are recommending implementation of the following actions (listed below) to strengthen existing case and contact management in Ontario. Guidance will be updated to reflect this shortly.

- **Existing Measures:**

As described in the [Management of Fully Vaccinated and Previously Positive Individuals Guidance](#)

- Continue to ensure that all high-risk contacts (regardless of vaccination status) are aware that they need to self-isolate and test immediately if they develop ANY symptom of COVID-19, including mild, non-specific symptoms.
- Continue to ensure that all high-risk contacts should be wearing a mask and self-monitoring for 10 days following exposure.
- At the PHU’s discretion, recommend that if the index case is a breakthrough case or if breakthrough cases are reported among high risk contacts, that fully vaccinated and previously positive high-risk contacts self-isolate.

- **Additional Measures:**

- **Increased Testing:**

- Increasing the recommendation of testing for fully vaccinated and previously positive high risk contacts (who are not self-isolating) from initially to initially and on or after 7 days from exposure.
- **Avoid Vulnerable Populations:**
 - Recommend that fully vaccinated and previously positive high-risk contacts avoid non-essential visits to settings with vulnerable populations or where there is a large number of unvaccinated people (for example: volunteering or visiting a long-term care home, shelter, school or child care setting) for 10 days after last exposure. These individuals may continue attending these settings for essential reasons (e.g. work, school, child care).
- **Frequency of Follow-Up Calls:**
 - Increasing the frequency of follow-up calls for fully vaccinated and previously positive high-risk contacts from once initially to at least twice, including follow up on day 10.
 - These follow up calls should inquire about symptoms and provide reminders for testing, masking and isolating if they develop symptoms.

Reinforcement of the current measures as well as implementing these additional measures will help protect Ontarians and contribute to the robustness of our current case and contact management approaches in Ontario. We will continue to monitor the data and adjust case and contact management as appropriate. I want to acknowledge the incredible efforts by all local public health units across the province to provide critical case and contact management support, which will be more important than ever as we move into the fall. Thank you for your ongoing work, collaboration and commitment to the COVID-19 pandemic response in Ontario.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Dr. Kieran Moore
Chief Medical Officer of Health

cc:

Rhonda McMichael, Assistant Deputy Minister, Population Health Initiatives Division
Dr. Jessica Hopkins, Chief Health Protection and Emergency Preparedness Officer, Public Health Ontario