

You've Been Asking – September 2020

With Alberta schools opening, and the inevitable calls many parents are receiving during the workday to come and pick up children who may be symptomatic with, or possibly exposed to, COVID-19, the College Practice Advisors have been fielding many calls from dental hygienists such as:

1. My child's school just called me. I have to pick up my child as they have a runny nose. Do I need to stay home from work?

You may need to stay home from work if your child cannot be left at home alone. You are only required to self-isolate if you have had direct close contact with an individual who has been identified as a COVID-19 positive and you did not have appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Taking time off work if required for childcare reasons would be considered an employment issue and not regulatory in nature. If you and your employer do not have an office policy for these situations, now is the time sit down together and devise one. For guidance, we recommend the joint "[Dental Practice Guidelines during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)" effective August 1, 2020 as a starting point and in particular the [Alberta Health Services Return to Work Guide for Healthcare Workers Decision chart](#) referenced in the resources listing on page 19. If your circumstances are not covered in the decision chart, further guidance may be obtained by calling 811.

Additional Information:

While not in the purview of regulatory issues per se, we note as of March 17, 2020, and until August 14, 2021, all Alberta employees are entitled to job-protected leave for a period of time that is necessary to meet the employee's family responsibilities to care for ill or self-isolated family members, or children affected by school and daycare closures. Visit <https://www.alberta.ca/personal-family-responsibility-leave.aspx> for more information.

2. My child's school just called me. My child must stay home from school for two (2) weeks because there was two (2) cases of COVID-19 positive results in their class. Do I need to self isolate as well?

You are required to self-isolate only if you have had direct contact, without proper PPE, with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19.

If your child begins to show symptoms, refer to the Alberta resources students here: <https://www.alberta.ca/k-to-12-school-re-entry-2020-21-school-year.aspx#toc-3>

If a student tests positive for COVID-19, they must isolate for at least 10 days. Visit [isolation requirements](#) for more detailed information.

Use the chart below to find required and recommended actions to take if a student shows symptoms.

| If someone has these symptoms | They are required to do this | Alberta Health also recommend this |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever • Cough • Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing • Runny nose • Sore throat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student is required to isolate for a minimum of 10 days from when their symptoms started or until their symptoms resolve, whichever is longer. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student should be tested for COVID-19. • If COVID-19 test results are negative and they do not have a known exposure to COVID-19, the student should stay home from school until their symptoms go away. • If the COVID-19 test results are positive, the student should follow the instructions they receive from Alberta Health Services (AHS) Public Health. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chills • Painful swallowing • Stuffy nose • Headache • Muscle or joint aches • Feeling unwell, fatigue or severe exhaustion • Gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or unexplained loss of appetite) • Loss of sense of smell or taste • Pink eye (conjunctivitis) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no mandatory requirements to isolate for these symptoms, however, it is recommended that a student stay at home until their symptoms go away. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student should be tested for COVID-19. • If COVID-19 test results are negative and they do not have a known exposure to COVID-19, the student should stay home from school until their symptoms go away. • If the COVID-19 test results are positive, the student should follow the instructions they receive from AHS Public Health. |

3. One of my co-workers is in self-isolation as they were identified as a direct contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19? Do I need to self-isolate as well?

You are required to self-isolate only if you have had direct contact, without proper PPE, with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19. You must follow direction from AHS if you have been identified as a direct contact of an individual who has been identified as positive for COVID-19.

Visit [isolation requirements](#) for more detailed information.

4. One of my co-workers tested positive for COVID-19? What do I need to do?

You are legally required to isolate for **14 days** and monitor for symptoms if you are a close contact of a person who tested positive for COVID-19 (i.e. provides care, lives with or has close physical contact **WITHOUT** appropriate use of personal protective equipment, or comes into direct contact with infectious body fluids).

Visit [isolation requirements](#) for more detailed information.

5. **I called 811 (and/or attended my COVID-19 test appointment) and was asked if I was a healthcare worker. When I responded yes, I am a dental hygienist, I was told I was not on the list of healthcare workers. Why is this?**

There has been some confusion created by this screening question. The College has been informed this question was intended to be a screening tool to determine whether someone works for Alberta Health Services (AHS) or Covenant health, as there are particular questions and tracking procedures in place for those individuals.

The College, and other health regulators, have brought this to the attention of Alberta Health.

All professionals regulated under the *Health Professions Act* are considered healthcare workers in Alberta.

Additional Information and Resources:

Temporary [personal and family responsibility leave](#) related to COVID-19 in Alberta

Alberta [job-protected leave](#) for recommended or required quarantine or self-isolation due to COVID-19 in Alberta

Watch this clip of Chief Medical Officer of Health discussing [COVID-19 symptoms](#).