

November 29, 2023

Dear Parents/Guardians,

RE: Notice of Respiratory Illness Outbreak at Vincent Massey School – Medicine Hat

A respiratory illness outbreak has been declared at Vincent Massey School – Medicine Hat. This is due to a large number of students sick with respiratory symptoms. Respiratory illness symptoms include: cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, loss or altered sense of taste/smell, runny nose/nasal congestion, fever, and may also include fatigue (significant and unusual), muscle ache/joint pain, headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea.

The germs that cause respiratory illness can easily be spread from one student to another through coughing and secretions from the nose and mouth. To help reduce the spread of respiratory illness we recommend that students:

- regularly clean their hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds,
- cough and sneeze into their sleeves or cover their mouths and noses with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and
- throw away used tissues immediately after sneezing, coughing or wiping their noses and then clean their hands.

Wearing a well-fitting, high-quality mask can help reduce the risk of becoming sick and help protect others from being exposed. Students will be supported regardless of their choice to mask or not.

For influenza and COVID-19, immunization is an important step in protecting yourself and those around you. Make the choice to stay up to date on all of your families' immunizations. Information on booking an appointment for yourself or your children can be found at ahs.ca/vaccine

Students who are ill with respiratory symptoms should stay home from school until their symptoms have improved, they have not had a fever for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication, and they feel well enough to resume normal activities.

For children who develop respiratory illness, mild symptoms can usually be managed at home and most children recover without special treatment. Home management includes getting extra rest and drinking plenty of fluids. Parents can visit the [AHS Health, Education and Learning \(HEAL\) website](https://ahs.ca/HEAL) for advice from Alberta Pediatric Emergency Medicine experts on managing specific symptoms and for guidance on when to seek medical care.

Please contact Health LINK Alberta toll free at 811 if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,
Public Health, Communicable Disease Control Outbreak Team