Presentations for Schools and Child Care Settings: **Physical Distancing**

Transcript: Presentation 5 of 6
This presentation reviews the utility of physical distancing regarding COVID-19 transmission and is intended for the school and child care settings.
Disclaimer

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There are three objectives for this presentation:

- To review physical distancing and its role in reducing the transmission of COVID-19;
- To review strategies to maintain physical distancing both indoors and outdoors in school and child care settings;
- To provide approaches to take when physical distancing isn’t possible.
What is Physical Distancing?

- Physical distancing, also referred to as social distancing, means staying at least 2 metres (or 6 feet) away from other people whenever possible.
- The purpose of physical distancing is to prevent exposure to droplets and aerosols from an infected person from being dispersed into the environment and onto people within 2 metres (or 6 feet) distance.
- Physical distancing is one measure in a bundle of measures used to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. No single measure should be relied on by itself.

- Physical distancing is a key preventative measure for COVID-19.
- Physical distancing is not all or none and the greater the distance the lower the risk.
- The term, physical distancing means that staff, essential visitors and students/children are to stay at least 2 meters or 6 feet away from one another whenever possible. This is particularly important when staff may remove their mask during a lunch or break.
- When a person is infected with COVID-19, being within 2 meters of the infected person increases the risk of exposure to their infectious droplets. Staying at least 2 metres away from others is one measure that helps to reduce the risk of potential exposure to COVID-19.
What Can I Do to Reinforce Physical Distancing for Students/Children?

The risk of transmission is higher indoors, particularly when physical distancing is not practiced and/or when masking is not practiced consistently by all.

- It is important to remember, the risk of transmission is higher indoors, particularly when physical distancing is not practiced and/or when masking is not practiced consistently by all.
- This slide provides a few examples of what can you do to reinforce physical distancing with students/children.
- Talk to students or children about physical distancing and why it is important in a non-judgmental manner.
- Visual cues e.g. markings on floors/walls to show distance between people. (e.g. tape or decals) can be helpful.
- Plan activities that promote physical distancing.
- Model appropriate behavior by demonstrating consistent physical distancing from other staff members.
- It is important to note that strict physical distancing may not always be possible (especially for younger children) – masking is an important supplemental strategy that will reduce the risk with close interactions.

What can you do support physical distancing in classrooms within a cohort?

- Avoid having children move desks closer together or change the orientation of desks. These configurations should aim to allow distance between children and/or maintain cohorts.

- While it is important to maintain physical distancing at all times between cohorts, it is recognized that it is not always feasible within a cohort. Therefore it is important to remember physical distancing along with other prevention measures such as hand hygiene and proper PPE use must be used together to reduce the risk of COVID-19.
What Can I Do To Support Physical Distancing When Moving Between Spaces?

- Stagger periods of movement and promote one way flow of traffic
- Maintain physical distance at all times between cohorts

What can you do to support physical distancing during exercise/use of the gym?

- It is important that there be careful consideration around exercise and gym class because physical activity can be associated with increased droplet/aerosol formation. With this in mind, outdoor activities should be encouraged and moderate to vigorous physical activities should be avoided indoors, unless they can occur in large, well-ventilated areas where physical distancing can be maintained.

- When moderate to vigorous physical activity takes place, at least 2 metres should be maintained between individuals.

- Attention should be given around processes and behaviours associated with exercising/gym class itself with consideration of how to reduce person-to-person contact and spread of droplets. For example, signage should be posted informing students of the maximum occupancy to facilitate physical distancing during the use of locker rooms and showers; students should avoiding direct and close physical contact, such as high fives, handshakes, fist bumps, and hugs.
What Can I Do To Support Physical Distancing During Outdoor Activities?

- Transmission risk is reduced outdoors, but health and safety measures should continue to be encouraged.

- Within cohorts:
  - Encourage activities that limit prolonged physical contact between children.
  - Maintain 2 metres (6 feet) physical distance when possible and practical, especially any time masks are removed for eating or drinking.

- Between cohorts:
  - Physical distancing between cohorts should be maintained wherever possible.


What can you do to support physical distancing during outdoor activities?

- The risk of transmission is reduced outdoors, but health and safety measures should continue to be encouraged.

- Consider activities such as nature or scavenger hunts, hide and seek, tag, and obstacle courses that can occur outside.

- Reinforce mandatory masking outdoors where physical distancing cannot be maintained.
What Should I Keep In Mind Regarding The Use Of Playground Equipment?

- Limit capacity (e.g., one school cohort at a time) and avoid crowded playgrounds to maintain physical distance.
- Wear a mask when physical distancing is not possible.
- Perform hand hygiene before and after playground use.

On the playground, important protective measures to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 include: limit capacity and avoid crowded playgrounds, wear a mask when physical distancing isn’t possible and clean your hands before and after using playground equipment with ABHR or soap and water.
Lunch And Nutritional Breaks: Points To Remember

- Stagger lunch and nutrition breaks and remain in designated areas assigned for eating food and drinking (e.g., classrooms, staff rooms, outside if weather permitting)
- Safely take off, store and put masks back on after lunch or nutrition breaks
- Perform hand hygiene before and after touching the mask and eating/drinking

Special considerations for staff rooms:
- Staff should maintain 2 metre physical distance at all times, especially when masks are removed while eating or drinking

- This slide highlights a few points related to lunch and nutritional breaks
- Clear instructions should be provided to students and staff on how to safely take off and store masks at lunch or other nutrition breaks, as well as putting masks back on afterwards.
- Non-medical face masks that need to be removed but are intended to be reused should be stored in a clean paper bag, envelope, or something similar that does not retain moisture.
- Hand hygiene is to be performed before and after touching their mask and eating/drinking.
- Students, children and staff should supply their own food and drink or drink bottle, and these items should be labelled and not shared.
- Individually portioned foods (including ready-to-eat foods, such as whole apples, cut carrots, cucumbers, and cheese, and foods from bulk or larger items such as crackers), can be safely portioned out as individual servings, in an inspected kitchen, and following appropriate food safety practices. If self-serve food items are available, utensils should be provided to minimize direct hand contact with food.
- Avoid the use of shared serving utensils. Consider providing single individual plated food.
For More Information ...

Public Health Ontario resources:
- Public Health Ontario – Schools and COVID-19 webpage
- COVID-19 Preparedness and Prevention in Elementary and Secondary (K-12) Schools: Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Overview (webinar)
- COVID-19 Preparedness and Prevention in Elementary and Secondary (K-12) Schools Checklist
- COVID-19 Preparedness and Prevention in Elementary and Secondary (K-12) Schools - Checklist Orientation (webinar)
- Physical Distancing

If you would like more information, please see the list of resources here.
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For More Information About This Presentation, Contact:

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If you have questions, please email communications@oahpp.ca. Thank you!