

Public Health Advice for Symptomatic and COVID-19 Positive Individuals

- People who test positive by PCR or rapid molecular tests may be contacted by their local public health unit or by the provincial case and contact management team.
- A **positive rapid antigen test** is highly indicative that the individual has COVID-19, and the individual and their household members are required to self-isolate.
 - Positive rapid antigen tests do NOT need to be confirmed by PCR/rapid molecular test in most settings and do not need to be reported to the public health unit.
 - Any sector specific guidance requiring and/or recommending the confirmation and reporting of a positive rapid antigen test should be followed

Individuals with COVID-19 Symptoms

- **Individuals** with [COVID-19 symptoms](#) (as below) who are ineligible for PCR/rapid molecular testing are presumed to have COVID-19 infection and are advised to **self-isolate** as soon as possible after symptom onset. See [table 1](#) and [flow chart 1](#) for isolation requirements for individuals with COVID-19 symptoms.
- **COVID-19 symptoms⁴ include:**
 - fever and/or chills; OR
 - cough; OR
 - shortness of breath; OR
 - decrease or loss of taste or smell; OR
 - **Two or more of:**
 - runny nose/nasal congestion
 - headache
 - extreme fatigue
 - sore throat
 - muscle aches/joint pain
 - gastrointestinal symptoms (i.e. vomiting or diarrhea)
- If the individual's symptoms are not included within the [COVID-19 symptom list above](#), they should stay home until symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms), to limit the spread of other illnesses that the individual may have (e.g., common cold virus, Influenza, other viral respiratory or gastrointestinal illness) and to monitor for the development of additional symptoms.
 - Household members and other contacts of these individuals **do not** need to self-isolate, as long as they have no symptoms.

⁴ Symptoms should not be related to any other known causes or conditions. See the [COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms](#) for more information.

- If the individual develops additional symptoms such that they now meet the COVID-19 symptom list above, they and their household should follow the guidance above.

Time-Based Clearance for Test-Positive Cases and Individuals with COVID-19 Symptoms

- Infection with COVID-19 likely provides short-term protection against re-infection. Individuals who have recently been infected with COVID-19 (either test-confirmed or symptoms of COVID-19) are still recommended to be up-to-date on their COVID-19 vaccinations for maximal protection against future infection (i.e. receive all recommended doses, including booster doses) in alignment with recommended dose intervals post-infection.

The recommended duration of self-isolation **after the date of specimen collection or symptom onset** (whichever is earlier/applicable) depends on relevant clinical factors such as age, vaccination status, severity of infection, and immune status. In all scenarios, **symptoms need to be improving for 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms) and no fever present prior to ending self-isolation.**

Table 1: Isolation Period for Test-Positive Cases and Individuals with COVID-19 symptoms

Isolation Period	Population
<p>5 days after the date of specimen collection or symptom onset (whichever is earlier/applicable)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully vaccinated individuals⁵ • Children under the age of 12
<p>10 days after the date of specimen collection or symptom onset (whichever is earlier/applicable)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals 12+ who are not fully vaccinated • Immunocompromised⁶ • Hospitalized for COVID-19 related illness (or at discretion of hospital IPAC) • Residing in a highest-risk setting
<p>20 days after the date of specimen collection or symptom onset (whichever is earlier/applicable)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe illness⁷ (requiring ICU level of care or at discretion of hospital IPAC)

- If self-isolation is complete after 5 days, additional precautions are needed due to residual risk of ongoing infectiousness.

⁵ Individuals are considered [fully vaccinated](#) if they have received a full series of a Health Canada authorized vaccine (e.g. two doses of AstraZeneca/Moderna/Pfizer or 1 dose of Janssen) at least 14 days ago.

⁶ Examples of **immunocompromised** include cancer chemotherapy, untreated HIV infection with CD4 T lymphocyte count <200, combined primary immunodeficiency disorder, taking prednisone >20 mg/day (or equivalent) for more than 14 days and taking other immune suppressive medications. Factors such as advanced age, diabetes, and end-stage renal disease are generally not considered severe immune compromise impacting non-test based clearance.

⁷ Severe illness is defined as requiring ICU level of care for COVID-19 illness (e.g., respiratory dysfunction, hypoxia, shock and/or multi-system organ dysfunction).

- For a total of 10 days (or 20 days for immunocompromised individuals) after symptom onset (or date of specimen collection, whichever is earlier/applicable), individuals must:
 - Continue to wear a well-fitted mask in all public settings
 - Individuals should maintain masking as much as possible in public settings. Reasonable exceptions would include temporary removal for essential activities like eating (e.g., when eating in shared space at school/work while maintaining as much distancing from others as possible)
 - Participation in activities where masking can be maintained throughout may be resumed, but individuals should avoid activities where mask removal would be necessary (e.g., dining out)
 - Individuals who are exempt from masking (e.g., children under two years of age, etc.) may return to public settings without masking
 - Not visit anyone who is immunocompromised or at higher risk of illness (i.e., seniors)
 - Not visit or attend work in any [highest risk settings](#).

Test-Based Clearance

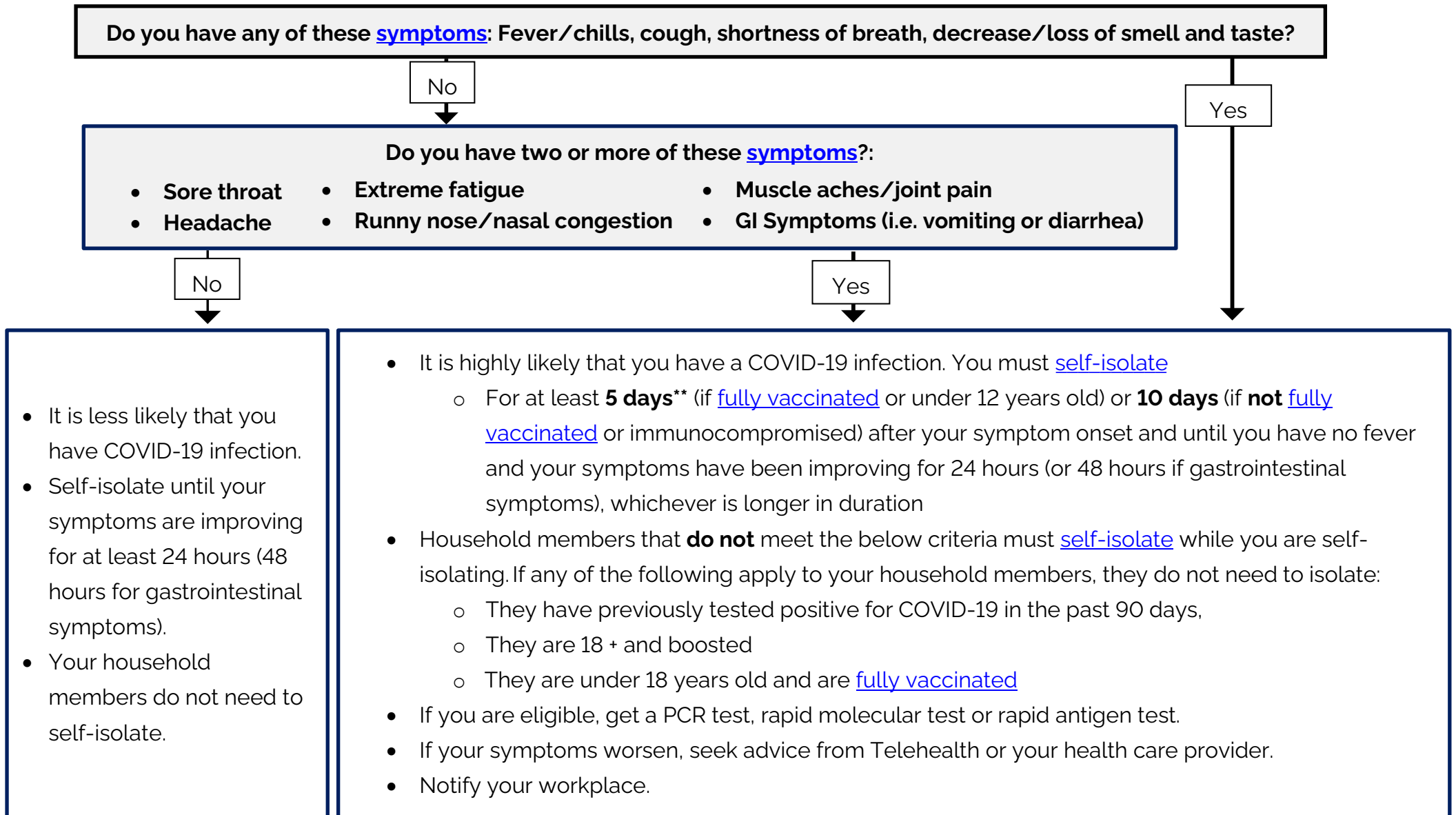
- Workers who are test-positive cases or isolated due to [COVID-19 symptoms](#) are **not required** to provide proof of a negative test result or a positive serological test result to their employers in order to return to work.
- It is expected that workers who have tested positive or who have symptoms of COVID-19 abide by public health direction (and occupational health, where applicable) and advice on when they would be considered clear to return to work.
- Generally, test-based clearance for COVID-19 test-positive cases (rapid antigen test or molecular) is not recommended (e.g., use of rapid antigen test to obtain a negative result to end self-isolation period early after an initial positive test).
 - An exception is for early return to work in highest-risk settings during critical work shortages. See [COVID-19 Interim Guidance: Omicron](#)

[Surge Management of Critical Staffing Shortages in Highest Risk Settings Guidance](#) for more information on early return to work.

Individuals with COVID-19 symptoms with access to rapid antigen tests

- Molecular testing is no longer being recommended for all individuals in the community with symptoms compatible with COVID-19. If individuals with COVID-19 symptoms have access to rapid antigen tests, rapid antigen tests may be used to assess the likelihood that symptoms are related to COVID-19, otherwise individuals should isolate following the time-based clearance guidance above.
 - A single negative rapid antigen test in an individual with COVID-19 symptoms does not mean that they do not have COVID-19 infection.
 - If two consecutive rapid antigen tests, separated by 24-48 hours, are both **negative**, the symptomatic individual is less likely to have COVID-19 infection, and they are advised to self-isolate until they have no fever and symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms).
 - The household members of the symptomatic individual with two negative tests may also discontinue self-isolation, as long as they are asymptomatic and have not had a positive test result themselves.

You have symptoms and are concerned you may have COVID-19. Now what?



Note: Symptoms should not be related to any other known causes or conditions. See the [COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms](#) for more information.

**For 10 days after symptom onset (or 20 days for immunocompromised individuals): maintain masking in public setting, do not visit or work in any highest risk setting, do not visit vulnerable individuals (e.g. immunocompromised individuals or seniors).

Management of Household Members

- COVID-19 positive cases/individuals with COVID-19 symptoms should isolate away from household members where possible to avoid ongoing exposure.⁸
- Household members of the COVID-19 positive case/individual with COVID-19 symptoms, should generally **self-isolate** while the individual with COVID-19 symptoms is isolating⁹, **with the following exceptions:**
 - Household members who are **18 years of age and older and have already received their [booster dose](#)** are not required to self-isolate
 - Household members who are **under 18 years of age and are considered [fully vaccinated](#)**¹⁰ are not required to self-isolate
 - Household members who have **previously tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days** (based on positive rapid antigen test or molecular test results), are not required to self-isolate and **can** attend high-risk settings, as long as they are currently asymptomatic.¹¹
- If self-isolation is complete after 5 days, or if self-isolation is not required, **for a total of 10 days after the last exposure to the COVID-19 case, ALL household members must:**
 - [Self-monitor](#) for symptoms and self-isolate if they develop any symptom of COVID-19;
 - Continue to wear a well-fitted mask in all public settings
 - Individuals should maintain masking as much as possible in public settings. Reasonable exceptions would include removal for essential activities like eating (e.g., when eating in shared space at school/work and maintaining as much distancing as possible)

⁸ If care is needed, where possible it should be provided by a household member who is fully vaccinated or boosted and not immune compromised.

⁹ Immunocompromised household members that do not meet the self-isolation exceptions should self-isolate for 10 days after last exposure to the case/symptomatic person.

¹⁰ Individuals are considered [fully vaccinated](#) if they have received a full series of a Health Canada authorized vaccine (e.g. two doses of AstraZeneca/Moderna/Pfizer or 1 dose of Janssen) at least 14 days ago.

¹¹ Physical proof of a previous positive COVID-19 test result is not required.

- Participation in activities where masking can be maintained throughout may be resumed, but individuals should avoid activities where mask removal would be necessary (e.g., dining out)
- Individuals who are exempt from masking (e.g., children under two years of age, etc.) may return to public settings without masking
- Not visit anyone who is immunocompromised or at higher risk of illness (i.e. seniors)
- Not visit or attend work in any [highest-risk settings](#) (unless they have previously tested positive for COVID-19 on a rapid antigen test or molecular test in the past 90 days).
- For self-isolating household members that have not developed symptoms, if any other household member develops COVID-19 symptoms, they **should extend** their self-isolation until the last symptomatic (or COVID-19 positive) person has finished their self-isolation period.
 - The initial COVID-19 positive case/individual with symptoms of COVID-19 **does not have to extend** their self-isolation period based on other household members becoming ill.

Management of Non-Household Close Contacts

Definition of Close Contacts:

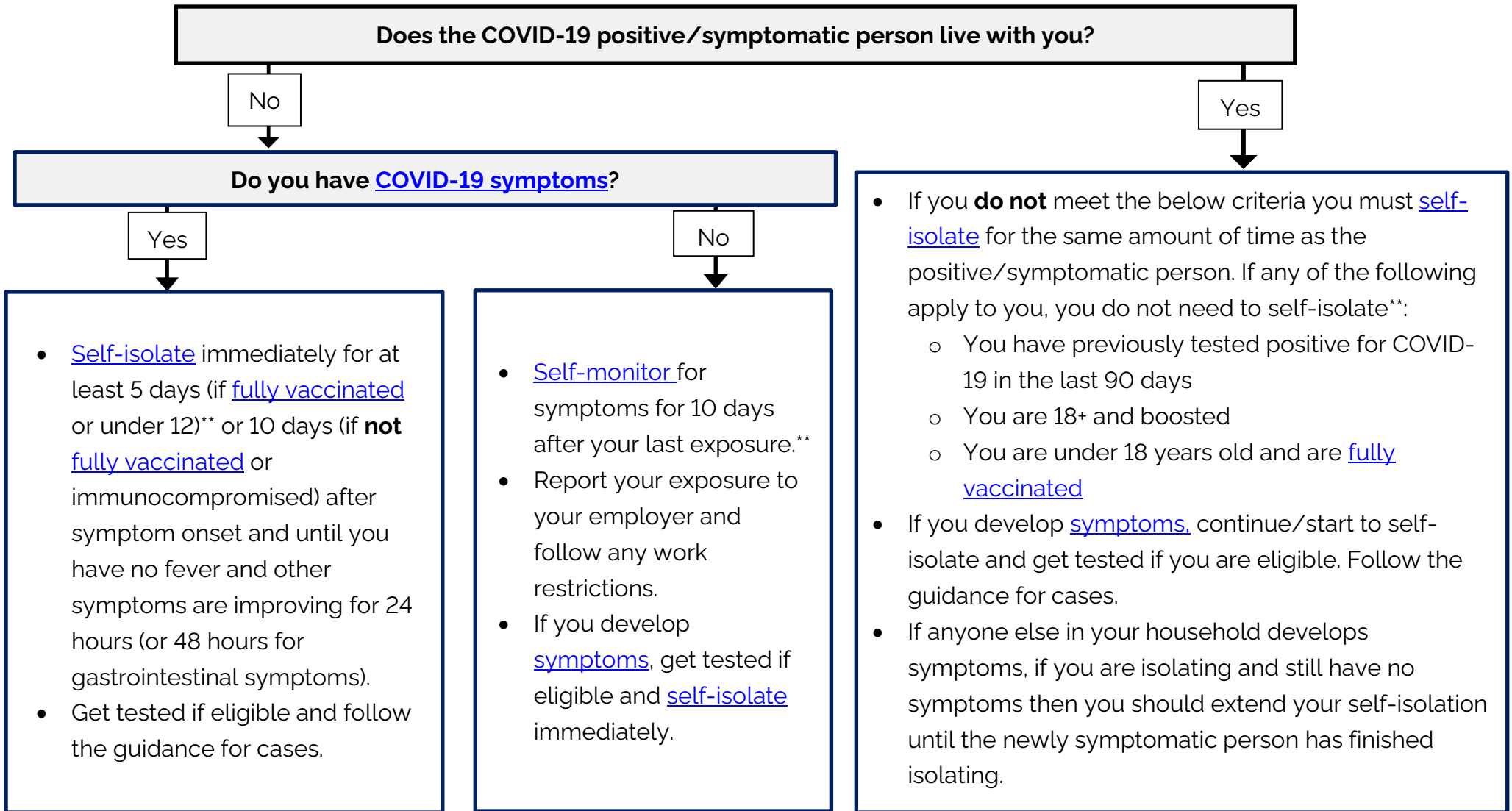
- Close contacts include those who had contact with the ill/COVID-19 positive individual within the 48 hours prior to their symptom onset if symptomatic or 48 hours prior to the specimen collection date (if asymptomatic/applicable) and until they started self-isolating; AND
 - Were in close proximity (less than 2 meters) for at least 15 minutes or for multiple short periods of time without appropriate measures as masking, distancing and/or use of personal protective equipment (as per [Management of Cases and Contacts of COVID-19 in Ontario](#)).
 - If the symptomatic/COVID-19 positive individual attends group settings (e.g., childcare, school, in-person work), generally, contacts in those settings (e.g., the classroom cohort) would **not** be considered close contacts due to the layering of health and safety measures in place in these settings. However, specific individuals in those settings may be identified by the case as

close contacts based on the nature of their interactions with the case (e.g. breach in measures, interactions outside of the setting).

Advice to Non-Household Close Contacts

- Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 (on a rapid antigen test, PCR test or rapid molecular test) and individuals with [COVID-19 symptoms](#) are advised to inform their close contacts of their potential exposure to COVID-19. For a total of 10 days after the last exposure to the COVID-19 case, close contacts must:
 - [Self-monitor](#) for symptoms and self-isolate if they develop any symptom of COVID-19;
 - Continue to wear a well fitted mask in all public settings;
 - Individuals should maintain masking as much as possible in public settings. Reasonable exceptions would include removal for essential activities like eating (e.g., when eating in shared space at school/work and maintaining as much distancing as possible)
 - Participation in activities where masking can be maintained throughout may be resumed, but individuals should avoid activities where mask removal would be necessary (e.g. dining out);
 - Individuals who are exempt from masking (e.g., children under two years of age, etc.) may return to public settings without masking
 - Not visit anyone who is immunocompromised or at higher risk of illness (i.e. seniors);
 - Not visit or attend work in any [highest-risk settings](#) (unless they have previously tested positive for COVID-19 on a RAT or molecular test in the past 90 days).
- Close contacts are advised to follow directions as per [flow chart 2](#).

You've been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or someone with COVID-19 symptoms. Now what?



Wear a well-fitted mask in public, physical distance and maintain other public health measures for 10 days following your last exposure if leaving home. You should **NOT visit or attend work in any highest risk settings and not visit individuals who may be at higher risk of illness (i.e. seniors or immunocompromised) for 10 days after your last exposure.