



September 22, 2021

COVID-19 FAQ #1 – 2021-2022

In this year's first COVID-19 FAQ, you will find information on: ventilation; personal protective equipment (PPE); work refusals; and COVID-19 testing.

Frequently Asked Questions

What should I do if I have concerns about ventilation in my classroom?

Report all concerns to your Principal. Ask for copies of the ventilation assessments that were completed over the summer or request that a formal assessment be done through your health and safety representative, if necessary.

The following rooms are entitled to a standalone HEPA air filtration unit this year:

- all occupied Kindergarten classrooms;
- Kindergarten/Grade 1 split classrooms; and
- any learning environments without mechanical ventilation, including classrooms, gyms, libraries, lunchrooms, childcare spaces, administrative spaces, and portables with no or poor mechanical ventilation.

If a Kindergarten class does not have mechanical ventilation, it should be provided with at least two air filtration units. The practice of providing air filtration units to Special Education programs where students are exempted from wearing masks should continue.

Ensure the standalone air filtration unit is maintained, placed appropriately, does not produce ozone, functions on the highest airflow setting and any warning lights are heeded (if applicable).

Open windows and doors whenever possible and try to schedule times for the class to leave the room to allow the air to clear. An alternative room may be required if proper ventilation cannot be ensured.

What can I do if I feel the medical mask provided to me by my school board is not sufficient protection?

COVID is airborne, and we know that requires better PPE. The Ontario Federation of Labour has created a [toolkit](#) to help when sharing concerns about medical masks.

Report all concerns to your Principal and request assistance from your ETFO local office or Health and Safety Representative.

There are other options for increasing the protection offered by the medical mask provided by the school board. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides [advice](#) on improving the fit of medical masks by using a mask brace or fitter, or double masking.

How can I proceed with a work refusal to ensure I am protected from COVID-19?

Workers have the right to refuse unsafe work if they believe their work environment is unsafe, but there can be more effective ways to address concerns. The Ministry of Labour (MOL) has generally not been supportive of COVID-19 work refusals. ETFO members are encouraged to use the school board's internal responsibility system first before calling in complaints to the MOL. Some options are included on ETFO's [Tip Sheet](#) for members. Your Joint Health and Safety Representatives and ETFO local leaders can also assist you.

If these attempts have been unsuccessful in addressing your concerns, or if there is an imminent danger (e.g., incomplete contact tracing in a class with a positive COVID-19 case), you can exercise your rights to refuse work. The process is outlined in this [ETFO video](#).

I have concerns about the safety of the rapid antigen testing kit. Where can I find answers?

The employer has provided information from the manufacturer and the Ministry of Health, and more information can be found at [Health Canada](#) or the Ontario government's [asymptomatic testing webpage](#). If you have concerns about taking the test or would like further information, please contact your medical practitioner or local public health unit.

For other information, please check [ETFO's dedicated COVID-19 webpage](#).