

COVID-19 existing resource response #12

(Last updated: 28 September 2021)

Question

What is the best-available evidence about the effects of public-health measures in schools (K-12), as well as about supporting adherence to these measures?

What we found

We searched the COVID-END global and domestic inventories of best evidence syntheses to identify evidence documents that focused on the effects of and supporting adherence to public-health measures in schools (K-12). The search terms used were: “school” AND (“effectiveness” OR “adherence” OR “public health measure” OR “public health” OR “measure”). We also contacted 40+ Canadian evidence-synthesis teams by email.

We identified 23 evidence documents that are listed in Table 1, which include:

- one guideline;
- one living review;
- four rapid reviews;
- five protocols for systematic reviews;
- one title/questions for reviews that are being planned;
- nine single studies; and
- two other types of documents (a government report and briefing document).

The [living systematic review](#) provides the most comprehensive and up-to-date assessment (last updated on 22 July 2021 with a planned update for October 2021) about the effects of public-health measures in schools. Specifically, Table 3 in the living review provides a summary of the outcomes associated with school transmission-mitigation measures. We found very little about adherence to public-health measures in schools, except for one single study focused on [adherence to mask-wearing requirements](#).

Box 1: Our approach

COVID-END in Canada responds to requests for evidence syntheses about topics related to COVID-19 that are likely to be explicitly considered by high-level decision-makers in multiple Canadian jurisdictions. This includes conducting rapid evidence profiles, living evidence profiles, rapid syntheses and living evidence syntheses. Examples of these evidence products can be viewed [here](#).

Sometimes requests are submitted about questions that have already been addressed by one or more recently updated, high-quality evidence syntheses or will be addressed soon by work underway (e.g., through a rapid synthesis underway with or being planned by a Canadian team, registered synthesis protocol or CIHR funding to conduct a synthesis). Other times all the requestor needs is a list of available evidence syntheses undertaken by COVID-END in Canada partners or COVID-END global partners. In these situations, we prepare a response that profiles these existing resources. These responses are typically prepared by a combination of: 1) searching both the COVID-END domestic inventory and the COVID-END global inventory; and 2) contacting 40+ Canada evidence-synthesis teams to identify any additional resources or work underway that is relevant to the question posed in a request. Such an existing resource response is equivalent to a rapid evidence profile prepared with the same turn-around time.

We followed this approach to prepare this existing resource response, which was prepared in one business day (and hence the equivalent to a one-day rapid evidence profile) to inform next steps in evidence synthesis, guideline development and/or decision-making related to the question that was posed.

Table 1: Hyperlinked titles to evidence documents about effectiveness of and supporting adherence to public-health measures in schools (K-12)

Evidence type	Evidence documents identified
Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures to prevent and control SARS-CoV-2 transmission in schools: Living guideline (Association of the Scientific Medical Societies in Germany; last updated 7 February 2021)
Living reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living rapid review update 17: What is the specific role of daycares and schools in COVID-19 transmission? (AMSTAR rating 8/10; last updated 22 July 2021)
Full systematic reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified
Rapid reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face coverings worn by children in school settings to reduce SARS-CoV-2 transmission (no AMSTAR rating available; last updated 19 August 2021) • Mask wearing in children and COVID-19: What we know so far (no AMSTAR rating available; last updated 12 July 2021) • Youth compliance with COVID-19 public health measures (no AMSTAR rating available; last updated 10 December 2020) • Measures implemented in the school setting to contain the COVID-19 pandemic: A rapid scoping review (AMSTAR rating 7/9; last updated 8 October 2020)
Protocols for reviews*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School practices to promote social distancing for COVID-19: A living systematic review protocol (anticipated completion date: 17 May 2020) • What is the risk of transmission of COVID-19 within school and preschool settings, and how effective are interventions to reduce transmission? A rapid review (anticipated completion date: 24 July 2020) • The relative effectiveness of multilevel interventions in reducing risks of transmission of lethal viruses in Grade K-12 school communities and school linked populations: A systematic review and best-evidence synthesis (anticipated completion date: 29 August 2020) • How effective are school-based interventions to reduce the transmission of respiratory infections, including COVID-19, in a school setting? (anticipated completion date: 30 September 2020) • Evidence synthesis gaps in understanding disease burden of children, transmission parameters in schools and households and effects of measures implemented in schools during the COVID-19 pandemic – a rapid systematic review of systematic reviews (anticipated completion date: 31 March 2021)
Titles/questions for reviews that are being planned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unintended consequences of measures implemented in the school setting to contain the COVID-19 pandemic (registered on 30 April 2021)
Single studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily testing for contacts of individuals with SARS-CoV-2 infection and attendance and SARS-CoV-2 transmission in English secondary schools and colleges: an open-label, cluster-randomised trial (published 14 September 2021) • Social network-based cohorting to reduce the spread of SARS-CoV-2 in secondary schools: A simulation study in classrooms of four European countries (published 8 September 2021) • The first 100 days: Establishment and effectiveness of campus protection measures at a college during the COVID-19 pandemic (published 28 August 2021) • A cluster randomised trial of the impact of a policy of daily testing for contacts of COVID-19 cases on attendance and COVID-19 transmission in English secondary schools and colleges (pre-print posted 25 July 2021)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of a pooled surveillance testing program for asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infections in K-12 schools and universities (published 17 July 2021) • Household COVID-19 risk and in-person schooling (published 4 June 2021) • COVID-19 Mitigation Practices and COVID-19 Rates in Schools: Report on Data from Florida, New York and Massachusetts (pre-print posted 21 May 2021) • Adherence to masking requirement during the COVID-19 pandemic by early elementary school children (published 16 May 2021) • Effectiveness of 3 versus 6 ft of physical distancing for controlling spread of coronavirus disease 2019 among primary and secondary students and staff: A retrospective, statewide cohort study (published 10 March 2021)
Other types of documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory sub-group on education and children's issues: Evidence on children, schools, early learning and childcare settings and transmission- Summary report (Scottish Government; published 12 August 2021) • Unintended consequences of measures implemented in the school setting to contain the COVID-19 pandemic (Science brief from the Ontario Science Table; published 19 July 2021)

*Given how old most of the protocols are, we checked for full reviews but did not identify any completed reviews for them. As a result, we included the protocols older than December 2020 in case reviews based on them will become available soon.

Wilson MG, Bain T, Bhuiya A, Mansilla C, Lavis JN. COVID-END in Canada existing resource response #12: What is the best-available evidence about the effects of public-health measures in schools (K-12), as well as about supporting adherence to these measures? Hamilton: McMaster Health Forum, COVID-END in Canada, 28 September 2021.

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