

## Return to school and daycare for children with cancer or a blood disease

August 20, 2020

Dear patient and parents,

The current situation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic has no doubt raised a lot of questions about your cancer treatment. You're probably worried about the return to school and daycare announced by the Québec government.

It's normal to have questions and concerns, and we want to give you as much information as possible to guide you through the process. So, here are the recommendations and information identified by the provincial committee on pediatric cancer.

COVID-19 is a very new disease; however, enough time has passed—and enough knowledge has been gained—to allow us to make certain observations on which to base our recommendations.

COVID-19 appears to present a low risk in children compared to adults:

- The COVID-19 transmission rate by children who are infected but asymptomatic appears to be low;
- International experience does not indicate any particular vulnerability to COVID-19, nor increased complications following an infection in children undergoing cancer treatment or follow-up;
- Based on this knowledge and the current situation, a return to school or daycare is recommended for most children undergoing treatment or follow-up.

However, even before the pandemic, pediatric hematologists-oncologists recommended that certain patients not attend school because of their immune status or medical condition. While not directly related to COVID-19, this recommendation still applies in the current situation, and your hematologist-oncologist will give you a letter if it applies to you.

The committee also recommends that siblings return to school in accordance with the measures issued by the *Direction de la santé publique et le ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur*. It is also safe for parents to go to work, provided they adhere to these measures. We want to assure you that the provincial committee meets regularly to adjust its recommendations to the evolving situation, which means that we'll be able to let you know quickly if anything changes.

For more information about COVID-19 and returning to school amid the pandemic, you can visit the following websites:

- Montreal Children's Hospital: <https://www.thechildren.com/school>
- Gouvernement du Québec: <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus>

We hope this information will help guide you through these unprecedented times. If you have any further questions or concerns, feel free to discuss them with your care team during your next visit to the cancer centre.

- Provincial committee on pediatric cancer\*

\*The provincial committee on pediatric cancer is composed of health professionals from the 4 major pediatric cancer centres of Québec: the CHU de Québec, the Montreal Children's Hospital of the McGill University Health Centre, the CHU Sainte-Justine and the CHU de Sherbrooke.