

Updated COVID Recommendations for K-12 Schools January 15, 2022

- ❖ Many can now end isolation and quarantine after 5 full days if following the guidance as described below. This is in part because the risk of spread is highest in the first 5 days.
- ❖ The risk of transmission does not end after 5 days, making proper and consistent mask use on days 6-10 critically important for these modifications to work to lessen time out of the classroom.
- ❖ Individuals unable (or unwilling) to wear a mask should continue to isolate or quarantine for the full 10 days. Test to Stay options may still apply in the case of quarantine.

Definitions are provided at the end of the document and at hyperlinks. Detailed scenarios and management are given in a table at the end of this document.

Well-fitting and properly worn masks are essential:

A face mask that is worn correctly must:



Have two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric, or be a surgical-type mask or KN95 mask*



Completely cover your nose and mouth



Fit snugly against the sides of your face and not have large gaps



NOT have exhalation valves or vents which allow virus particles to escape



NOT be worn under the nose

*Child size KN95 masks are recommended for children

Well-fitting NIOSH-approved respirators (e.g., N95s) offer the most protection, however studies continue to support the use of well-fitting multi-layered cloth masks to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Therefore, it's important that you always choose a well-fitting and comfortable mask or respirator and wear it properly. A poorly fitting or uncomfortable mask or respirator may be less effective if it is worn improperly or taken off frequently, which may reduce its intended benefit.

COVID-19 Isolation for K-12 Schools for those that are ill or have a positive test

Anyone that has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or has symptoms of COVID-19 needs to isolate, regardless of whether they have been vaccinated or have been infected with COVID-19 before.

All people diagnosed with COVID-19, or have symptoms and were not able to get tested, should stay in isolation for at least 5 full days*

This includes:

- People who have a positive viral test for COVID-19, regardless of whether or not they have symptoms.
 - People with symptoms of COVID-19, including people who got tested for COVID-19 and are awaiting their results or those that have not been tested (even if they have not been in close contact with someone with COVID-19).

Note: Day 0 is the day symptoms began or the day of the positive viral test (for people with no COVID-19 symptoms).

Note that these recommendations **do not apply to people with severe COVID-19 or with weakened immune systems (immuno-compromised). See CDC's COVID-19 Quarantine and Isolation page recommendations for when to end isolation for these groups*

After day 5:

- **If they had symptoms:** Isolation can end after 5 full days if they have been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and their other symptoms have improved (loss of taste and smell may not get better for weeks or months and need not delay the end of isolation). In other words, they can leave the house on day 6.
 - If they continue to have a fever or their symptoms have not improved after 5 days, they should stay in isolation **until** they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and their other symptoms have improved.
- **If they never had symptoms:** They can end isolation after 5 full days. In other words, they can leave the house on day 6.
 - If they do develop symptoms after testing positive, the 5-day isolation period should start over with day 0 being the day symptoms started. They can end isolation as described above in "if they had symptoms".
- They should continue to wear a well-fitting mask around others at home and in public for 5 additional days (day 6 through day 10) after the end of their 5-day isolation.

- They should not participate in any elective activity that cannot be done while properly wearing a well-fitting mask
- If they are unable to properly wear a mask when around others, they should continue to isolate for 10 days.
- They should avoid people who are immunocompromised or at high risk for severe disease, and nursing homes and other high-risk settings, until after at least 10 days.

School Logistics for Days 5-10 of Isolation:

The school should ensure there is a plan for people returning after 5 days of isolation to stay masked at all times indoors.

- This includes ALL indoor activities, such as gym, athletics, band, choir, etc. Any activity that cannot comfortably and safely be done while wearing a well-fitted mask must not be done until the full 10 days has passed.
- During times in the school day when students or staff members may typically remove masks indoors (such as during lunches, snacks, etc.), the school should have a plan to adequately distance those that are still potentially contagious.

All people who have symptoms of COVID-19 *and* tested negative* or received an alternate diagnosis from a healthcare provider that explains their symptoms

can return to school when:

- It has been at least 24 hours since the person had a fever (without using fever reducing medicine); AND
- They have felt well for at least 24 hours (their main symptoms have improved, they have had no vomiting or diarrhea for at least 24 hours, and any other specific recommendations based on their diagnosis).

*In a person with symptoms of COVID-19, a **negative test** is defined as either

1. a negative PCR/molecular test or
2. a negative antigen test *if* the person has a low likelihood of SARS-CoV-2 infection (e.g., the person has no known or suspected exposure to a person with COVID19 within the last 14 days, is fully vaccinated, has had a COVID-19 infection in the last 90 days,). See [CDC antigen algorithm for interpretation of antigen tests](#)

For further guidance in handling cases in school, please refer to “Responding to COVID-19 Cases in K-12 Schools” <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-contact-tracing/guide.html>

COVID-19 Quarantine for K-12 Schools for those exposed to someone with COVID-19

Who Does Not Need to Quarantine:

Students, teachers, and staff who came into close contact with someone with COVID-19 and are in one of the following groups do not need to quarantine:

1. They are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines.

2. They had confirmed COVID-19 within the last 90 days (meaning they tested positive using a viral test).
3. For close contacts of school exposures only:
 - If both individuals were correctly and consistently wearing a mask during the entire exposure (the close contact and the person with COVID-19)
 - They test negative prior to attending class or any school function at least every other day starting the first day they became aware of the exposure until and including day 5 after exposure.

Who Should Quarantine*:

Students, teachers, and staff who came into close contact with someone with COVID-19 should quarantine for at least 5 days after their last close contact if they are in one of the following groups (Note: day 0 is the last day of exposure):

1. Is NOT up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines, which currently.
 - Is any age and not vaccinated for COVID-19
 - Is 5 years through 11 years old and has not had 2 doses of Pfizer vaccine
 - Is 12 years through 17 years and has not had 2 doses of Pfizer and a booster if it is more than 5 months
 - Is 18 years or older and has not had 2 doses of Pfizer or Moderna and a booster if it is more than 5 months, OR got their initial dose of Johnson & Johnson vaccine more than 2 months ago and has not gotten a booster
2. Has not had a diagnosed case of COVID-19 within the last 90 days

Anyone unable (or unwilling) to wear a mask when around others should continue to quarantine for 10 days.

*Close contacts that result from exposures in the classrooms, other in-school settings, extracurricular school activities, including athletic activities and school transportation could also be eligible for **Test to Stay (TTS) programs** that would allow them to stay in the school setting during the quarantine period. Outside the school setting, quarantine recommendations would still apply. Further information in the TTS section.

NOTE: For close contacts in the household settings: A person is contagious starting 2 days before their symptoms started until 10 days after their symptoms started (or 2 days before their positive test was performed until 10 days after their test was performed if they never had symptoms). If they properly wear a mask from days 6 through 10 they are not considered contagious on those days. Day 0 of a person's quarantine starts on the last day they were around the person while they were contagious. If they individual is unable to stay isolated on days 1-5, or unable to consistently wear a mask at home on days 6-10, the household close contact would be in quarantine longer.

All close contacts, regardless whether or not they should quarantine, should:

- Wear a well-fitting mask when around others for 10 days from the date of their last close contact with someone with COVID-19 (the date of last close contact is considered day 0).
- Get tested at least 5 days after their last close contact with someone with COVID-19, unless they had tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days.
- Watch for symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever (100.4°F or greater), cough, or shortness of breath.

- Anyone that tests positive or develops any COVID-19 symptoms should isolate from other people and follow recommendations for isolation.
- Avoid people who are immunocompromised or at high risk for severe disease, and nursing homes and other high-risk settings, until after at least 10 days.

School Logistics for Days 5-10 of Quarantine:

The school should ensure there is a plan for people returning after 5 days of quarantine to stay masked at all times indoors.

- This includes ALL indoor activities, such as gym, athletics, band, choir, etc. Any activity that cannot comfortably and safely be done while wearing a well-fitted mask must not be done until the full 10 days has passed.
- During times in the school day when students or staff members may typically remove masks indoors (such as during lunches, snacks, etc.), the school should have a plan to adequately distance those that are still potentially contagious.

Who are NOT eligible for the shorter isolation/quarantine recommendations and should continue to follow the traditional 10-day recommendations?

1. ***Children < 2 years of age, or other individuals who are unable or not willing to wear a mask:*** People who cannot wear a mask, including children < 2 years of age and people of any age with certain disabilities, should isolate (if infected) and quarantine (if exposed) for 10 days.
2. ***People who have severe illness:*** People with severe COVID-19 illness (e.g., requiring hospitalization, intensive care, or ventilation support) should isolate for at least 10 days and may need to isolate longer after symptom onset. They should consult with their healthcare provider for guidance.
3. ***People who are immunocompromised:*** This guidance is not intended for people who are immunocompromised and infected with COVID-19 as they might stay infectious longer than 10 days. They should consult with their healthcare provider for guidance.

Test to Stay (TTS)

Test to Stay (TTS) is a method of contact tracing and COVID-19 testing that is sequentially repeated to allow **school-associated close contacts** who are not fully vaccinated to continue in-person learning during their quarantine period. It is an evidence-based method to minimize the impact of quarantine and limit school absences. **It does not apply to staff or students exposed outside of the school setting (i.e., household close contact, etc.).**

If a student, teacher, or staff has come into close contact with someone with COVID-19 **in the school-setting** and has been identified as someone who should quarantine, they can continue to attend school and school functions if they:

- Test negative by rapid antigen testing prior to attending class or any school function on the **FIRST** day they became aware of the exposure and then at least every other day until and including day 5 after exposure.

- Testing only needs to be done prior to attending school or school activities, in other words, it does not have to be done on weekends or holidays unless the student will be attending a school activity
- Testing can be done in school by trained staff, at an offsite testing facility, or at home using a home test. Only rely on home test if you feel the results being reported to you are trustworthy.
- If any test is positive, the student must then isolate as explained above.
 - NO CONFIRMATION WITH PCR IS NEEDED of a positive rapid antigen test in this situation as they were exposed to someone with COVID-19 therefore have a higher likelihood of infection. See https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/resources/Antigen_Testing_Algorithm_CommunitySettings.pdf

Participants in Test to Stay (TTS) should:

- Wear a well-fitting mask when around others for 10 days from the date of their last close contact with someone with COVID-19 (the date of last close contact is considered day 0).
- Watch for symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever (100.4°F or greater), cough, or shortness of breath.
 - If symptoms develop, they should isolate from other people and follow recommendations for isolation.
- Avoid people who are immunocompromised or at high risk for severe disease, and nursing homes and other high-risk settings, until after at least 10 days.

School Testing Opportunities and State Support from MDHHS

MI Safer Schools Testing Program

MDHHS is providing schools antigen testing supplies free of charge through the MI Safe Schools Testing program. Schools and individual school districts can request antigen test kits through the Mi Safer Schools: School Antigen COVID Test Ordering form. MDHHS will be leveraging our partnership with Intermediate School Districts to help distribute COVID-19 antigen tests based on the orders placed in the School Antigen COVID Test Ordering Form. Questions about test supply orders can be sent to your Intermediate School District and any other school testing related questions can be sent directly to MDHHS at MDHHS-COVIDtestingsupport@michigan.gov

Community Testing Locations

- Free community-based pop-up rapid antigen testing
Coronavirus - Community Based Pop-Up Rapid Antigen Testing
- Find a COVID-19 testing location
Coronavirus - Test

Home Tests

At-home rapid COVID-19 antigen tests are now available and can be purchased over-the-counter in grocery stores and pharmacies. MDHHS has some at-home tests that will be available to schools through their ISDs. ISDs should contact the MDHHS-COVIDtestingsupport@michigan.gov team to order tests. The MI Backpack Home Test Pilot Program is a voluntary program offered by MDHHS for Michigan K-12 students, educators, staff, and their families who want an extra layer of protection against COVID-19

Additional Resources

- [MDHHS Recommendations for Safer School Operations during COVID-19](#)
- [Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools | CDC](#)
- [Parents and Caregivers | CDC](#)
- [CDC Guidance for Fully Vaccinated People](#)
- [COVID-19 Guidance for Safe Schools \(American Academy of Pediatrics\)](#)

For the latest information on Michigan's response to COVID-19, please visit [Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](https://michigan.gov/Coronavirus). You may also call the COVID-19 Hotline at 888-535-6136 or email COVID19@michigan.gov.

Definitions

Close Contact Someone who was less than 6 feet away from an infected person (laboratory-confirmed or a clinical diagnosis) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (for example, *three individual 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes*). An infected person can spread SARS-CoV-2 starting 2 days before they have any symptoms (or, for asymptomatic people, 2 days before the positive specimen collection date).

In the **K–12 indoor classroom** setting or a structured outdoor setting where mask use can be observed (i.e., holding class outdoors with educator supervision), ***the close contact definition excludes students who were between 3 to 6 feet*** of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a clinical diagnosis) ***if both the infected student and the exposed student(s) correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time***. This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.

Exposure

Contact with someone infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, in a way that increases the likelihood of getting infected with the virus.

immunocompromised or at high risk for severe disease please see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html> for a complete list

Isolation is separating people who have COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19 from those who are not infected or showing symptoms in order to prevent transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

Moderately to Severely Immunocompromised People (as pertains to 3rd dose of vaccine): please see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/immuno.html> for more information

Quarantine is used by someone who has been exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19 but has not tested positive for COVID-19 and does not have symptoms. Quarantine is important because even before a person has tested positive for COVID-19 or has symptoms, they could spread the virus that causes COVID-19 to other people without knowing it.

Symptoms of COVID-19 may include any of the following:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Viral test Two types of viral tests are used: nucleic acid amplification tests (NAATs), often known as PCR tests, and antigen test. These can be performed in a laboratory, at a testing site, or at home or anywhere else.

Management of COVID Cases and Contacts (adapted from [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit](#))

Exclusion Criteria	Scenario	Criteria to return to school
Positive Antigen test for COVID-19, but no Symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Person has tested positive with an antigen test but does not have symptoms of COVID-19 Not known to be a close contact to someone diagnosed with COVID-19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the person has a negative PCR test performed within 48 hours of the positive antigen test: the positive antigen test can be considered a false positive and the person can immediately return to school If the person does not have a repeat PCR test OR has one within 48 hours and it is also positive, the person can return to school 5 days after the specimen collection date of the first positive test, as long as they did not develop symptoms. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The person must continue to mask for an additional 5 days to minimize risk of infecting others.
Positive PCR test for COVID-19, but no Symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Person has tested positive with a PCR test but the person does not have symptoms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Person can return to school 5 days after the specimen collection date of their positive test as long as they did not develop symptoms. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The person must continue to mask for an additional 5 days to minimize risk of infecting others.
Symptoms	<p>Person has symptoms of COVID-19 <u>and</u> has tested positive with an antigen test or PCR test</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Person has symptoms of COVID-19 but has not been tested for COVID-19 nor has visited a health care provider. <i>(Therefore, the person who has symptoms is presumed positive for COVID-19 due to the presence of a clinically compatible illness in the absence of testing.)</i></p>	<p>Person can return to school when</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It has been at least 5 days after the first day of symptoms; AND It has been at least 24 hours since the person had a fever (without using fever reducing medicine); AND Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving. <p>The person must continue to wear a mask for 10 days after the first day of symptoms to minimize the risk of infecting others</p>
Symptoms	<p>Person has symptoms of COVID-19 but has received a negative test for COVID-19* or has visited a health care provider and received an alternate diagnosis that would explain the symptoms of COVID-19</p> <p><small>*In a person with symptoms, a negative test is defined as either (1) a negative PCR/molecular test or (2) a negative antigen test if the person has a low likelihood of SARS-CoV-2 infection (e.g., the person has no known or suspected exposure to a person with COVID-19 within the last 14 days or is fully vaccinated). See CDC antigen algorithm for interpretation of antigen tests</small></p>	<p>Person can return to school when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It has been at least 24 hours since the person had a fever (without using fever reducing medicine); AND They have felt well for at least 24 hours. <p>Note: The health care provider is not required to detail the specifics of the alternate diagnosis.</p>
Exposure	Person in a mask optional setting for whom an exception to exclusion (as defined below) does not apply and has been in close contact with someone with COVID-19	Person must be excluded from school for 5 days after exposure. The 5 days of exclusion begins on the day after the last known close contact with the COVID-19 positive individual. Person may return to school after exclusion if asymptomatic but must continue to wear a mask for an additional 5 days, for a total of 10 days after exposure. They should test on day 5, if possible. If symptoms occur, person should immediately isolate until a test either confirms COVID-19, or a negative result rules it out.
Exposure Exemption: vaccinated	<p>Person has been in close contact with someone with COVID-19 and is in one of the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They are 12 years of age and have received their primary series AND booster, if eligible. They are between the ages of 5-11 and have completed a primary series of COVID-19 vaccines. 	<p>Person does not need to be excluded from school if they have had no symptoms after being a close contact to someone with COVID-19</p> <p>The person must continue to wear a mask for 10 days after the exposure to minimize the risk of infecting others and should get tested on day 5, if possible.</p>
Exposure Exemption: Masked exposure	Person has been in close contact with someone with COVID-19, in which both individuals were correctly and consistently wearing a mask the entire time	Person does not need to be excluded from school if masks were being worn correctly and consistently by both the person with COVID-19 and the potential exposed person. This applies to exposures in classrooms, other in-school settings, extracurricular activities, including athletic activities and school transportation.
Exposure Exemption: Infection in past 90 days	Person has been in close contact with someone with COVID-19 and had confirmed COVID-19 within the last 90 days (tested positive using an antigen or PCR test)	Person does not need to be excluded from school if they have had no symptoms after being a close contact to someone with COVID-19. The person must continue to wear a mask for 10 days after the exposure to minimize the risk of infecting others. Testing is not recommended.
Exposure Exemption: Test to Stay	Person in a mask required setting and has been in close contact with someone with COVID-19 in which one or both individuals were not wearing a mask the entire time	Person does NOT need to be excluded from school after a close contact, including unmasked exposures (e.g., during lunch or extracurricular activities), if they have no symptoms and get tested on the day of notification of exposure and at least every other day until and including day 5 after exposure prior to attending school and school functions. They must wear a mask in school settings. While the individual does not need to be excluded from the school setting, quarantine measures may still apply in non-school settings.

