

Isolation & Quarantine for K-12 Schools, K-12 Sports & Early Childhood Education

Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Promoting vaccination among all eligible individuals can help schools protect students and staff, as well as their families.

Layered COVID-19 prevention strategies remain critical to protect people, including students and staff, who are not up-to-date or not eligible for COVID-19 vaccines, especially in areas of substantial or high transmission levels.

The following public health recommendations include updates that allow for alternatives to the standard quarantine guidance. These options are intended to provide additional support for in-person learning for K-12 students and continued attendance for early childhood students as safely as possible.

Isolation for Individuals with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 (this guidance has NOT changed)

Individuals with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection should not return to school until the following “end of self-isolation criteria” are met. Day 0 is the day symptoms began or, if asymptomatic, the day the person took a test that had a positive result. Day 1 is the day after symptoms began, or if a person does not have symptoms, the day after the person tested positive (use the date the test sample was collected).

- Stay home for 5 days.
- If symptoms are resolving after 5 days, you can return to school.
 - If you continue to have a fever or your other symptoms have not improved after 5 days, you should stay in isolation until you are fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and your other symptoms have improved.
- Continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days (i.e., through Day 10).
 - If school cannot ensure masking for 5 additional days, then the individual should isolate for a full 10 days.
 - Student athletes participating in contact sports should not return to athletic events for the full 10 days.

Identifying Close Contacts to a Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 Case

Contact tracing should be conducted for each case’s infectious period, including the 48 hours before a person with confirmed or a suspected COVID-19 case developed symptoms (or the 48 hours before specimen collection, if asymptomatic) until they were isolated.

Close contact is defined as:

- Being within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hr period **OR**
- Having direct physical contact with an infected person

Exception: If BOTH the case and the contact were engaged in consistent and correct use of a well-fitting face mask AND were **3 or more feet** from each other, then the contact is NOT considered a close contact. They should continue to mask while indoors until at least Day 10 post-exposure.

NEW: Quarantine Guidance for K-12 Schools (3 options)

The last day an individual has close contact with a case is Day 0 of quarantine. Day 1 begins the day after their last close contact.

Below are three quarantine options, intended to provide additional support for in-person learning for K-12 students and continued attendance as safely as possible.

1. CDC Quarantine Guidance for K-12 Schools (Safest Protocol)

Below is the current CDC quarantine guidance for K-12 school settings.

Individual Type	Quarantine Guidance
Students who have received 2 doses of an mRNA vaccine (such as Pfizer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarantine is not necessary. • Wear a mask around others for 10 days. • Test on Day 5, if possible*. If your test result is positive, see isolation guidance above.
Students who are unvaccinated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay home/quarantine for 5 days. After that, return to school but continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days (i.e., through Day 10). • Test on Day 5, if possible*. If your test result is positive, see isolation guidance above.
Staff who have completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 5 months, OR have completed the primary series of J&J vaccine within the last 2 months, OR have been boosted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarantine is not necessary. • Wear a mask around others for 10 days. • Test on Day 5, if possible*. If your test result is positive, see isolation guidance above.
Staff who are unvaccinated, OR have completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine over 5 months ago and are not boosted, OR completed the primary series of J&J over 2 months ago and are not boosted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay home/quarantine for 5 days. After that, continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days (i.e., through Day 10). • Test on Day 5, if possible. If your test result is positive, see isolation guidance above.
Anyone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the 90 days from their last close contact with a confirmed case.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarantine is not necessary. • Wear a mask around others for 10 days.
<p><i>* Limited availability of diagnostic tests may make it difficult for an asymptomatic individual to find testing. Testing on Day 5 post-exposure is recommended, but is not required for return to school.</i></p>	

2. Test to Stay Option for Students Who are Not Fully Vaccinated & Staff Who are Not Up to Date

Schools may follow CDC's quarantine guidance above (safest option) or may implement a test to stay strategy for students and staff who are not fully vaccinated so they may remain in school. In this option, students and staff do not need to quarantine at home if:

- They remain asymptomatic **AND**
- They mask through Day 10 following their last point of close contact with a positive case **AND**
- They test negative for COVID-19 twice during Days 0 - 5 following their last close contact. Tests should be administered on non-consecutive days (e.g., specimen collection on Day 2 and Day 4). If a student tests positive, see isolation guidance above.

3. Universal Masking Option

Masks and respirators are [effective at reducing transmission of SARS-CoV-2](#), the virus that causes COVID-19. Some masks and respirators offer higher levels of protection than others, and some may be harder to tolerate or wear consistently than others. It is most important to wear a well-fitted mask or respirator correctly that is comfortable for you and that provides good protection.

Schools that require universal masking for all students and staff, regardless of vaccination status, may choose to utilize the following guidance:

- Individuals in a mask-required school setting do NOT need to quarantine after a close contact, including unmasked exposures (e.g., during lunch or PE), if they do not have symptoms.
 - Students who develop any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should immediately isolate and seek testing. If they test positive, see isolation guidance above.

Individuals Who Cannot Mask in the K-12 Setting

Most people, including those with disabilities, can tolerate and safely wear a mask. However, there are certain people with disabilities who, because of their disability, cannot wear a mask or cannot safely wear a mask. This includes:

- A person with a disability, who, for reasons related to the disability, would be physically unable to remove a mask without assistance if breathing becomes obstructed. Examples might include a person with impaired motor skills, quadriplegia, or limb restrictions.
- A person with an intellectual, developmental, cognitive, or psychiatric disability that affects the person's ability to understand the need to remove a mask if breathing becomes obstructed.

Reasonable accommodation should be made for students who are unable to wear a mask so that they may remain in school after a COVID-19 exposure. Staff who work closely with these students should be [up-to-date on vaccination](#) and wear a mask. Prevention strategies in these situations should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with your Regional Epidemiologist and Medical Director.

Quarantine Guidance for K-12 Sports

Contact vs. Non-Contact Sports

- Contact sports are sports in which some level of contact between participants is expected. Contact sports include, but are not limited to, football, basketball, soccer, wrestling, softball, baseball, volleyball, and cheer.
- Non-contact sports are sports in which contact with another individual is not expected. Non-contact sports include, but are not limited to, swimming, golf, bowling, bass fishing, and gymnastics.

Due to the high rates of transmission that have been observed among K-12 sports teams, in order for student athletes to continue to participate in contact sports where masking cannot be guaranteed, additional precautions should be taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The safest option for preventing additional COVID-19 transmission is for student athletes in contact sports to abstain from participation in athletic events for 10 days following close contact with a COVID-19 case. However, a test-to-stay strategy can be utilized to allow continuity of participation in sports where distancing and masking cannot be maintained.

Student athletes who are fully vaccinated, or who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the previous 90 days, can continue to practice and compete in contact sports following close contact with a COVID-19 case if:

- They remain asymptomatic **AND**
- They test negative for COVID-19 on screening tests administered twice during Days 0-5 and twice during Days 6-10 following the last close contact. Tests should be administered on non-consecutive days (e.g., specimen collection on Day 2, 4, 7, and 10).

Student athletes who are NOT fully vaccinated should refrain from participation for 5 days and can return to practice or compete in close contact sports on Day 6 following close contact if:

- They remain asymptomatic **AND**
- They test negative for COVID-19 on screening tests administered twice during Days 6-10 following the last close contact. Tests should be administered on non-consecutive days (e.g., Day 7 and 10).

Quarantine Guidance for Early Childhood Education Settings

Early childhood education centers may utilize the CDC outlined quarantine guidance for staff and any children over the age of 2 who are able to wear a mask correctly and consistently. For those children who are unable to mask or wear a mask correctly and consistently through an entire day, early childhood education centers should utilize one of the below quarantine options.

Safest Option (current CDC guidance): All close contacts quarantine at home for 10 days. Should a close contact test positive, see isolation guidance.

Safer Option: Close contacts quarantine at home for 5 days. If they remain asymptomatic, they can return to the childcare center on Day 6 with a negative COVID-19 test administered no earlier than Day 5. A second COVID-19 test should be administered between Days 7 – 10.

Acceptable Option: Close contacts do not need to quarantine if they remain asymptomatic and have negative COVID-19 tests administered four (4) times over 10 days. Two (2) tests should be administered during Days 0 - 5 following last close contact and two (2) tests should be administered during Days 6 - 10. Tests should be administered on non-consecutive days (e.g., specimen collection on Day 2, 4, 7, and 10).