

COVID-19 INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS¹

Rev. August 18, 2022 Interim Guidance, Subject to updates

Decision Tree Recommendations for Evaluating Symptomatic Individuals from Pre-K, K-12 Schools and Day Care Programs

Isolate⁴ if **ANY** of the following symptoms² are present: Fever (100.4°F or higher), new onset of moderate to severe persistent headache, shortness of breath, new cough, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, new loss of sense of taste or smell

When suspicion of COVID-19 is high due to other symptoms, school health officials should isolate students/staff.

Testing is Strongly Recommended for ALL Persons with COVID-19-Like Symptoms, Regardless of Vaccination Status.

Status	Return to School Guidance (For recently vaccinated persons, see Post Vaccination Guidance)	Quarantine Close Contacts? ⁵	Additional Guidance
A. COVID-19 diagnostic test positive (confirmed with PCR test or probable with antigen test³) OR COVID-like symptoms without COVID-19 testing and exposed to confirmed case (probable case).	For those that can mask upon return, <u>isolate</u> for at least five calendar days ⁴ from onset of symptoms; return after the five calendar days AND if 24 hours with no fever (without fever-reducing medication), diarrhea and vomiting ceased for 24 hours AND improvement of symptoms AND consistent masking upon return through day 10. If unable to mask, isolate for 10 days.	No	The local health department may supply dates as to when a student or staff member can return to school, otherwise schools should permit return consistent with this guidance. Letter from local health department releasing the student or staff member from isolation or quarantine is not required.
B. Symptomatic individual with a negative COVID-19 diagnostic test <i>Negative COVID-19 diagnostic tests are valid only for the date on which they are collected; specimens collected within 48 hours of onset are acceptable for determining school admission status. If testing is not accessible or delayed, testing within 72 hours would be acceptable, but testing within 48 hours of onset should be promoted (Home Tests are Allowed).</i>	<u>Isolate</u> until symptoms have improved/resolved per return-to-school criteria for diagnosed condition, including fever free for 24 hours, symptoms improving and until 24 hours after diarrhea and vomiting have ceased. Follow provider directions, recommended treatment and return to school guidance as per school policies and IDPH Communicable Diseases in Schools .	NO	NAAT (PCR) testing/confirmation or serial antigen (2 or 3 test 48 hours apart) is recommended ⁶ , especially if the staff/student is a close contact to a confirmed case, the school is experiencing an outbreak, or the local health department is recommending due to high Community Levels (see CDC Testing Algorithm). For persons who have had COVID-19 within the past 90 days, antigen tests are recommended .
C. Symptomatic individual without diagnostic testing who is not a known close contact to a confirmed case.	For those who can mask upon return, isolate for at least five ⁵ calendar days from onset of symptoms; return if 24 hours with no fever (without fever-reducing medication), vomiting and diarrhea have ceased for 24 hours, AND improvement of symptoms AND consistent masking upon return through day 10. If unable to mask, quarantine for 10 days.	NO	If the ill individual is not tested within 24 hours of first notification of symptoms, household members should be sent home.

1 Based on available data and science, schools must make local decisions informed by local context in consultation with their local public health department. This chart provides recommendations that should be consider in conjunction with the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#).

2 New onset of a symptom not attributed to allergies or a pre-existing condition.

3 In most situations, a positive antigen in symptomatic person does not require a confirmatory test, should be

considered a probable case (follow Row A and D) and will not be discounted or deemed a false positive with a negative PCR.

4 Severely immunocompromised or severely ill may need to be isolated for 20 days as per guidance from the individual's infectious disease physician.

5 CDC no longer recommends quarantine for close contact but [recommends](#) masking and testing.

6 [FDA At Home COVID-19 Antigen Tests – Take Steps to Reduce Your Risk of False Negatives](#).