

K-12 SCHOOL ISOLATION & QUARANTINE GUIDANCE

Introduction

Central District Health recognizes the value of in-person learning and the challenge of balancing the risks of COVID-19 and educational, social, and emotional supports. While COVID-19 is circulating in the United States, measures need to be taken to ensure that schools operate in a way that minimizes risk to students, staff, and the community.

The following are Central District Health's recommendations for quarantining school-aged children who have been exposed to a person who has tested positive for, or is diagnosed with, COVID-19 (case).

What is quarantine?

Quarantine refers to the practice of separating individuals who have had close contact with someone with COVID-19 to determine whether they develop symptoms or test positive for the disease. Quarantine also reduces the risk of transmission if an individual is later found to have COVID-19. Quarantine for COVID-19 should last for a period of 5-10 days after the exposure has ended. Ideally, each quarantined individual should be quarantined in a single location. Quarantine includes not leaving the quarantine location to attend activities, school, childcare, work, or visiting the community or having visitors at the location of quarantine. The exception is to seek medical care.

Quarantine options

5 Day Quarantine – Contact remains asymptomatic, can return on Day 6 and **must** maintain wearing a face covering through day 10. Testing at Day 5 is highly encouraged, and an individual should remain in quarantine until negative test results have been obtained.

10 Day Quarantine – If contact is unable to wear a mask properly over the nose and mouth quarantine for 10 days.

If signs or symptoms develop while in quarantine, the contact should isolate other than to seek testing. Isolation guidance can be found below and on our [website](#).

Options to Reduce or Eliminate Quarantine

Immunization

Schools should have a protocol in place to verify vaccination status. Those who are fully vaccinated and have received a booster do not need to quarantine after an exposure but should wear a mask and monitor for symptoms.

- If person is **fully vaccinated and has received their booster*** OR had their vaccine series within the past 6 months OR has tested positive within the past 90 days** and exposed:
 - You should get tested at 5 days after your exposure, even if you don't have symptoms.
 - Wear a mask indoors in public for 10 days following exposure.
 - If you receive a positive test result, follow isolation guidance
- If person is **yet to be vaccinated** (unvaccinated) OR if their vaccination series was more than 6 months prior* and exposed:
 - Quarantine for 5 to 10 days.
 - Wear a mask indoors in public for 10 days post exposure.
 - You should get tested at 5 days after your exposure, even if you don't have symptoms.
 - If you receive a positive test result, follow isolation guidance

**Must be fully vaccinated and have the booster if they are 18 years or older. Booster for J&J is at 2 months post vaccination. Booster for Pfizer is at 5 months post primary series. Booster for Moderna is 6 months post primary series. Anyone ages 5-17 does not need to have the booster dose.*

***Proof of vaccination or positive test in the past 90 days should be available to allow the contact to stay in the classroom. If an individual tests positive multiple times within 90 days, their 90-day window starts on the date of their first positive test.*

Mask Use

CDC recommends universal mask use in K-12 schools, and only gives quarantine adjustments for students in instructional settings. Presented below are additional options if a school does not have universal masking but is taking other risk reduction measures to balance the value of in-person learning and health. These options should be considered in conjunction within the context of CDH's [Conditions and Considerations for Modifying Educational Delivery Models](#).

If both the case and the contact were wearing masks 1) that cover the nose and mouth and 2) were worn consistently during the exposure period, then:

- The case must isolate at home as recommended by public health.
- **The contact does not need to quarantine* but should continue to wear a mask and monitor for symptoms if the contact occurred in an instructional setting.**

- *Optional Modification* - if the contact occurred in a school setting and may include staff and students.

If universal mask use is not in place, optional reduction in quarantine strategies include:

Test to Stay – Case isolates. Contacts test every day prior to attending school during the quarantine period. Mask use is highly encouraged.

Mask & Test Strategy – Case isolates. Contacts (or classroom) wear a mask for 10 days following exposure while continuing to attend classes. Contacts test 5 days post exposure. Anyone testing negative can discontinue the modified quarantine but continues to wear a mask until day 10. Anyone testing positive isolates, and additional contacts follow quarantine policy. Consider daily symptom screening by staff or parent.

Mask Only – Case isolates. Contacts (or classroom) wear a mask for 10 days following exposure while continuing to attend classes. Consider daily symptom screening by staff or parent.

*All reduction in quarantine strategies without universal mask policies require contact tracing to be performed. Physical distancing and environmental hygiene (i.e., ventilation, cleaning) should be increased if possible.

Additional Considerations

- If using the 5-day Isolation and Quarantine Guidance
 - Day 6-10 following infection or exposure individuals should not travel, interact with high-risk individuals, or go places that a mask cannot be worn. In situations where a mask cannot be worn, such as while eating, individuals should distance to the extent possible.
- Community and household exposures
 - Using Test to Stay, Mask & Test, or Mask Only reduction strategies could be considered to increase in-person learning opportunities.
 - Household exposures are most likely to result in transmission. Therefore, modified quarantine may increase risk within the school setting. Community exposures vary in risk.
- Contact tracing should continue throughout the school as sick individuals are identified
 - Schools with mandatory mask policies may consider modified contact tracing for instructional settings.
 - Example: A student tests positive, classroom is notified of a positive case, but due to mask use, no quarantines are required, so no formal contact tracing is done and no individual notifications are made.
 - Contact tracing is most effective during lower transmission times. Schools should consider increased contact tracing during low community and school transmission.
- School reporting of close contacts of a case should continue
 - When contact tracing is performed, online form is preferred.

- School notification to students, families, and staff of exposure should continue
 - CDH may be able to assist should we have the capacity. Schools should have a plan in place for notification in the instances when CDH does not have capacity to help with this process.
- All contacts should maintain physical distancing (at least 3 feet in instructional settings, 6 feet outside of instructional settings) and wear a face covering.

CDH recommends remaining extra vigilant in monitoring health and staying home if feeling ill, especially if under recommended quarantine.

CDH recommends that schools provide clear communication to their communities about the risks and benefits associated with having exposed teachers or staff participate in the school setting.

What is isolation?

Isolation separates people with a contagious disease from people who do not have the disease. You isolate when you are sick or when you have been infected with SARS-CoV-2, even if you do not have symptoms. People who are in isolation should stay home until it's safe for them to be around others. At home, anyone sick or infected should separate from others, or wear a well-fitting mask when they need to be around others. People in isolation should stay in a specific "sick room" or area and use a separate bathroom if available.

Everyone who has presumed or confirmed COVID-19 should stay home and isolate from other people for 5-10 days (day 0 is the first day of symptoms, or the date of the day of the positive viral test for asymptomatic persons).

Isolation options

5 Day Isolation – Individual remains asymptomatic or has improving mild symptoms can return on Day 6 but **must** maintain wearing a face covering through day 10. *If unable to wear a mask properly over the nose and mouth, refer to isolation period below.*

- If using a test to return plan, an antigen test at Day 5 is recommended. If result is positive, continue isolation for 10 days. If result is negative, can return on Day 6 and must wear a mask through Day 10.

10 Day Isolation – Individuals having had moderate to severe [symptoms](#) that are immunocompromised and/or that are unable to wear masks should isolate for 10 days following infection. Day 0 is the first day of symptoms or the date of the day of the positive viral test for asymptomatic persons.