(Updated: 9/29/2020)

What is COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019)?

COVID-19 is the respiratory illness caused by a new coronavirus. The name, COVID-19, stands for corona (CO), virus (VI), disease (D), and 2019 (19).

People with COVID-19 report a wide range of symptoms, from mild symptoms to severe illness. After exposure to the virus, it can take 2 to 14 days to develop symptoms. The average time is about 5 to 7 days. Up to 40% of people with the virus may have no symptoms or very mild symptoms.

Symptoms of COVID-19 include:
- 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

For more information on symptoms, please consult the CDC guidelines at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html or the Allegheny County Health Department website: https://www.alleghenycounty.us/coronavirus

Who is a "close contact"?

The CDC defines a *close contact* as someone who:
- was within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more
- provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19
- had direct physical contact with the person (hugged or kissed them)
- shared eating or drinking utensils
- was sneezed, coughed, or somehow got respiratory droplets on them

You are still considered a close contact even if you were wearing a mask while you were around someone with COVID-19. Masks are meant to protect other people in case you are infected, and not to protect you from becoming infected. There may also be some personal protection from mask wearing as well.

What does a "close contact" of a someone who has COVID-19 have to do?

- Close contacts must remain at home (self-quarantine) for 14 days from the last date they were in close contact to the person with COVID-19. That is because it can take 14 days to develop symptoms after exposure.

- You should not have visitors to your home.

- If you need any support (example, food, housing, medications, support) in order to remain in quarantine or isolation, please call 211.

- You should monitor for symptoms, and you should contact a health care provider if you develop symptoms to get tested.

- If a close contact would like to be tested for COVID-19, they should contact their healthcare provider to schedule a COVID-19 test. It is best to schedule the test about a week (5 to 7 days) after exposure; this is the most likely time to find the virus if it is there. If you are not able to schedule a test through your healthcare provider, or do not have a healthcare provider, please visit https://bit.ly/ACTestingSiteMap or www.alleghenycovidtesting.com to find a testing site.

- If you need transportation to a testing location, please call 211, follow the prompts to COVID. The Health Department has resources available for people who do not have transportation to a testing site.

- Please note - a negative result before end of the 14-day quarantine period does not rule out possible infection. By self-quarantining for 14 days, you lower the chance of possibly exposing others to COVID-19.

If you were a close contact and got tested, what should you expect after you get the results?

Stay home until you get results

If your test is positive for COVID-19:
- Please let the school nurse know as soon as you receive the positive result.

- In accordance with CDC guidance, a person who has COVID-19 must remain home in isolation until all of the following are true:

    o At least 10 days have passed since the onset of symptoms AND

    o Until fever-free off anti-fever medications for 24 hours AND

    o Symptoms are improving.

Note: The COVID-positive individual does NOT need a repeat COVID-19 test or a doctor's note in order to return to the school

- You will receive a call from the Allegheny County Health Department to provide more information and to answer any questions.

- The Health Department will work with you and the school nurse to determine who are your close contact and then reach out to them to quarantine, monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and get tested.

If your test is negative:
If your test is negative, you still need to continue the 14-day quarantine. This is because sometimes the tests are wrong, and the best way to make sure you do not spread the virus is for you to stay home for the full 14 days. If at the end of 14 days you have not had any symptoms and the test was negative, you may return to the school.

What is the difference between isolation and quarantine?

- Isolation separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick. Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.

- You should not leave isolation until you meet the CDC criteria outlined above.

- A quarantine should last 14 days since the last possible day of exposure.

What happens in the school if a student or staff member has symptoms that could be COVID-19 (a COVID-like illness)?

The person with symptoms can return to school when:

- COVID-19 testing was completed and was reported as negative, and the person meets the school's normal criteria for return after an illness

    OR

- A health care provider has evaluated the person and documented an alternative diagnosis and confirmed that the person may return to school.

    OR

- COVID-19 testing was not done and all of the following are true:

    o At least 10 days since the onset of symptoms AND

    o Fever-free off anti-fever medications for 24 hours AND

    o Symptoms are improving.

- **Note: Repeat COVID testing is not required to return to the school.**

If someone in the household was a close contact, does everyone in the household have to quarantine?

If no one in the household is showing symptoms of COVID-19, then only the person who was identified as the close contact has to quarantine.

What can we do to prevent COVID-19?

There are simple things you and your family can do to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These include:
- Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer frequently
- Wear masks that cover your nose and mouth in public
- Keep at least 6 feet from others
- Limit trips outside the home to essential travel (for example work, school, groceries, medical and dental appointments)
- Avoid closed areas with many people

If you have questions about COVID-19 in general, COVID-19 in schools, or need community resources, please call 211 and follow the prompts for these areas.