

# COVID-19 in Schools - Guide for Caregivers, Parents and Families

This guide is a resource for caregivers, parents, and families as students return to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year. This guide is general, and your school or school district may have other resources to share with you. If your student is exposed to COVID-19 in school or tests positive for COVID-19, this guide outlines the next steps you can take to keep you and your community safe. This guide includes:

- Recommended public health guidance
- Resources you can access to help prevent the spread of COVID-19

Please keep this guide in an accessible place for your future reference. We suggest that you read through the entire guide and then decide on the best course of action for you and your student.

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## When should students stay home from school?

- If they are sick, even if they do not have COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19
- If they are showing symptoms of COVID-19
- If they test positive for COVID-19, even if they show no symptoms
- If they have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 and the school and local public health department recommends quarantine
- If a member of your household tests positive for COVID-19

## What does “close contact” mean?

Close contact refers to when a person has come within about 6 feet of anyone who has COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more, cumulatively, within a 24-hour period.

## What does it mean to be fully vaccinated?

Being fully vaccinated means it has been more than 14 days since a person received the second dose of a 2-dose vaccine, or more than 14 days since they received one dose of a single-dose vaccine. If it has been less than 14 days, they are not considered fully vaccinated. If a fully vaccinated person is exposed to COVID-19, public health guidance recommends watching for symptoms for 14 days after being exposed, and if symptoms develop, isolating at home and getting tested. Currently, vaccines are available to those age 12 years and above.

## How do I know if my student was in close contact with someone at school who has COVID-19, or if my student has tested positive for COVID-19 in school?

The school will notify you if your student comes in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, or if your student has tested positive. The school will not share the identity of the individual who has COVID-19.

If your student:

- Is exposed to COVID-19 in school, and the school and local public health department has recommended quarantine, your student will be asked to stay at home. If your student is asked to quarantine, you may get a call from your local health department. If your child is 15 years or older, they may ask to talk to your child directly.
- Receives a positive test for COVID-19 in school, they will be asked to isolate at home.

If either of these situations occur, you can anticipate working with your school or district to arrange distance learning. *The Philomath school that your student attends will send you a letter detailing quarantine dates and how to access distance learning.*

For more information about school guidance and protocols, visit Oregon Department of Education's website:

[Oregon Department of Education - Ready Schools, Safe Learners \(RSSL\) 2021-22 Guidance](#)

## What does it mean to be exposed to COVID-19 at school?

Exposure means that a student has close contact for longer than 15 cumulative minutes in 24 hours with someone who has COVID-19. If a student is diagnosed with COVID-19, the school will work with local public health officials to determine who was exposed and the need for quarantine.

An exception from quarantine is permitted if students are at least three feet apart in the classroom and they are wearing a face covering. In this situation, students who are in close contact with another student with COVID-19 don't need to quarantine unless they have symptoms. This doesn't apply to students who were exposed to infected teachers, staff, or adults in a classroom, even if everyone was masked.

## What do isolation and quarantine mean?

Isolation and quarantine are actions that help stop the spread of COVID-19 and keep people safe.

**Isolation** means that someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 stays home and stays away from other people in their home as much as possible. If your student, or anyone else in your home, tests positive for COVID-19, we ask that they follow isolation guidelines, including any specific instructions from the local public health department.

Generally, isolation will involve:

- Staying at home for 10 days after symptoms appeared, AND remaining home until they have been fever-free for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medications, and other symptoms have improved. During this time, individuals isolating will need to stay away from other people in the home as much as possible. They may stay alone in a bedroom or in another part of the home and use their own bathroom, as much as possible. It also helps to reduce the spread by staying out of areas of the house where people gather, such as the living room or kitchen.
- Having one person to care for the individual with COVID-19, if possible. This caretaker should keep 6 feet of distance from other people in the house as much as possible, wear a face covering, and wash their hands often.
- Having other members of the same household stay home for 14 days, as they are considered close contacts. This is called **quarantine**.

**Quarantine** means keeping someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others outside their home. A person can spread COVID-19 before they have symptoms. Quarantine reduces the risk of accidentally spreading the virus to other people. If members of the same household have not directly been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, and they are not showing symptoms, they do not need to quarantine.

If your student, or anyone else in your home, has come into close contact with someone who has COVID-19, we ask that they follow quarantine guidelines, including any specific instructions from the local public health department. Generally, quarantine will involve:

- Staying home for the 14 days following a close contact with someone who has COVID-19, monitoring health and watching for symptoms.
- Staying away from others, especially those with high risk of getting very sick from COVID-19. This means not participating in any activities outside the home.
- Having one person to care for the individual in quarantine, if possible. The caregiver should keep their distance from other people in the house as much as possible and use a face covering, stay 6 feet apart as much as possible, and wash their hands often.

People who are vaccinated and have come into close contact with someone who has COVID-19 do not need to quarantine if they meet the following criteria:

- They are fully vaccinated, meaning they have received both doses of a two-dose vaccine, or one dose of a single-dose vaccine, AND it has been more than 14 days since completing the vaccine series.
- They have not shown symptoms since being exposed to COVID-19.

Public health guidance recommends that fully vaccinated people still watch for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days after being exposed, and if symptoms develop, isolating at home and getting tested.

It may be difficult to isolate or quarantine in the manner described here, so we encourage all households to follow this guidance as best they can. If you need support to follow these guidelines, please call 2-1-1 or visit [211info.org](https://211info.org)

## What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

People with COVID-19 can have a wide range of symptoms, ranging from mild to severe. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after being exposed to the virus. However, it is still possible for someone with no symptoms to be able to spread the virus. Students displaying “primary” COVID-19 symptoms will be required to stay home from school.

The “non-primary” COVID-19 symptoms may occur with other illnesses, in addition to COVID-19. *Note: Nasal congestion and headache or more common with the Delta variant of Covid-19 than with previous variants.*

If a student shows any one of the primary symptoms at school, the school will send them home. Headaches and nasal congestion will be evaluated case-by-case. *Per previous norovirus guidelines, students with vomiting or diarrhea should not be at school until symptom-free for 24-48 hours.*

### Primary symptoms of COVID-19:

- Cough
- Fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher
- Chills
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- New loss of taste or smell

### Non-primary symptoms of COVID-19:

- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Nasal congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

If you are looking for information about getting tested for COVID-19, visit the Oregon Health Authority’s COVID-19 testing website:

[COVID-19 Testing In Oregon \(govstatus.egov.com/or-oha-covid-19-testing\)](https://govstatus.egov.com/or-oha-covid-19-testing)

## If a student has been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 and is going to quarantine, how long should they do so?

We ask they quarantine at home for 14 days after they were last exposed. In some cases, the local public health department may provide other recommendations for quarantine. A quarantine period happens as follows:

- **Day 0:** Date of exposure, and quarantine period begins
- **Day 1:** First day of quarantine period
- **Days 2-14:** Continue quarantine
- **Day 15 or later:** Return to school

If individuals develop symptoms of COVID-19 during quarantine, we ask that they begin isolating within the home for 10 days, starting from the day they first showed symptoms.

If you are looking for information about getting tested for COVID-19, visit:  
[COVID-19 Testing In Oregon \(govstatus.egov.com/or-oha-covid-19-testing\)](https://govstatus.egov.com/or-oha-covid-19-testing)

## If a student tests positive for COVID-19 and is going to isolate, how long should they do so?

If they have symptoms of COVID-19, we ask they isolate at home for 10 days after symptoms started AND they have been fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication), with other symptoms improving. If they do not have symptoms, we ask they isolate at home for 10 days, starting after the date of their positive test. A negative test is not needed to return to school. An isolation period happens as follows:

- **Day 0:** Symptoms start, and isolation period begins
- **Day 1:** First day of isolation period
- **Days 2-10:** Continue isolation
- **Day 11 or later:** Return to school if they have been fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and other symptoms have improved.

## My student has been fully vaccinated, do they still need to quarantine?

If your student has been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and is fully vaccinated, they do not need to quarantine. We ask that they still watch for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days after their exposure, and if they develop symptoms, we ask they isolate and seek testing.

## Should I also stay home if my student is going to quarantine?

If you, or other household members, were not exposed to the person with COVID-19, quarantine is not needed if your student remains healthy. If anyone in your household gets sick during the quarantine period, we ask that other household members follow regular quarantine guidance, starting from the day the person who is sick first showed symptoms.

If you are looking for information about getting tested for COVID-19, visit the Oregon Health Authority's COVID-19 testing website:  
[COVID-19 Testing In Oregon \(govstatus.egov.com/or-oha-covid-19-testing\)](https://govstatus.egov.com/or-oha-covid-19-testing)

## What if my student tests positive for COVID-19 but does not show symptoms?

Since it is possible for someone without symptoms to still spread the virus, we ask that they isolate at home and stay away from others in the home for 10 days. Everyone else who lives in the house is considered a close contact.

We ask that other members of the house quarantine at home for at least 14 days, following regular quarantine guidance. It is possible for them to develop COVID-19 during these 14 days and staying home stops them from spreading the virus in school and other places without knowing it.

## What if someone in our household has COVID-19, but my student is not sick?

We ask that your student stay home for 14 days (quarantine) in case they get sick with COVID-19. Public health guidance recommends other members of the household also quarantine for 14 days to avoid possibly spreading the virus to others outside the home. The ill person will need to isolate. *Note: Benton County requires students to stay home 14 days after last close contact with a person who has Covid-19. In some households, where it may be difficult to avoid contact with a positive family member, quarantine may last longer than 14 days.*

If your student is fully vaccinated or has been Covid-19 positive in the previous 90 days, they do not need to quarantine.

## If my student came into close contact with someone who has COVID-19 but receives a negative test, can they go back to school?

If the test result is negative, we ask that your student still stay home for the full 14-day

quarantine period. It is possible they could still get sick, and if your student has COVID-19 but is not showing symptoms, staying home will greatly reduce the risk of spreading it to other people.

If your student is fully vaccinated and has received a negative test after coming into close contact with someone who has COVID-19, they do not need to stay at home. If your student is showing primary COVID-19 symptoms but has tested negative, we ask they continue to stay home until they have been fever-free for 24 hours and other symptoms have improved.

## What is an example of how quarantine and isolation might go?

- **Day 0:** You are notified that your student is exposed to someone who has COVID-19.
- **Day 1:** Your student begins the quarantine period, staying home for 14 days and not leaving the house.
- **Days 2 through 4:** Your student is quarantining at home and remains healthy.
- **Day 5:** Your student gets symptoms of COVID-19.
- **Day 6:** Since your student has symptoms, they now switch to isolation and stay away from other people in the house for 10 days from today.
- **Day 14:** Your student is feeling better but continues to isolate at home, staying away from others in the house.
- **Day 15:** The 10-day isolation continues until the end of day 15.
- **Day 16 or later:** Your student no longer needs to isolate at home and can return to school.

## How can I talk with children about staying home from school and about COVID-19?

Children are naturally curious. The closing of schools affects children directly. As a result, they will likely have many questions about what the virus is, why schools are closed and why they have limited access to friends and family.

When speaking with children it is important to do the following:

- Reassure children that you are doing everything that you can to keep them safe.
- Do your best to stay calm and remain reassuring. Children will respond to what you say and how you say it.
- Make sure that children know that they can come to you when they have questions. Make time to speak with them, and have that time be as uninterrupted as possible.
- Be honest with them. When accurate information isn't available, children often think of the worst-case scenario. Don't ignore their concerns, but explain that some people have COVID-19. Let them know that schools are closed to slow the spread of the virus across the state, not necessarily because there are cases in their school.

- Avoid language that may lead to blame or stigma. Remind them that the virus can make anyone sick regardless of their race or age.
- Pay attention to what children hear on the television or radio and what they see online. Make sure to vary what they are seeing and hearing and encourage them to practice a digitally healthy lifestyle. Too much information focused on COVID-19 can cause children to experience anxiety or panic.
- Teach children everyday actions to stop the spread of germs, like how to wash their hands and appropriate physical distancing behavior.
- Provide information that is honest, accurate and age appropriate. Make sure that you have conversations about things other than COVID-19.
- Keep yourself and your family safe by staying home when you're sick, covering your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, washing your hands often with soap and water and cleaning frequently touched surfaces and objects. Let children know that they play a very important role in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

For more information on how to talk with your children, visit:

[Oregon Department of Education – How to Talk with Children About the Coronavirus](#)

**Document accessibility:** For individuals with disabilities or individuals who speak a language other than English, OHA can provide information in alternate formats such as translations, large print, or braille. Contact the Health Information Center at 1-971-673-2411, 711 TTY or [COVID19.LanguageAccess@dhsoha.state.or.us](mailto:COVID19.LanguageAccess@dhsoha.state.or.us).