



American Academy of Pediatrics
Orange County Chapter
INCORPORATED IN CALIFORNIA

Orange County Healthy School Restart Working Group Parents & Guardians: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Many families in Orange County are asking if their children should be tested for COVID. Therefore, we have sought to answer some of parents' most asked questions about symptoms and when testing is a good idea. We also provide information about testing, where to test, and which types of tests are best. The Student Symptom Decision Tree is a great resource to guide you as to when your child should stay home, when they should be tested, when they should see their health care provider and to determine the next steps after receiving your child's COVID test results.

GENERAL NOTES:

- Children and teens (regardless of whether they are vaccinated or not) who have symptoms of COVID should be tested without delay to determine if they have been infected by the disease.
- Children and teens who have been exposed to someone with COVID but reflect no symptoms should be tested as below:
 - [Those who are fully vaccinated](#) are recommended to be tested 3-5 days after exposure, and continue to wear a mask in school settings as required
 - Those who are not fully vaccinated should [quarantine](#) and be tested after being identified according to the Student Symptom Decision Tree, and, if negative, tested again in 5–7 days after last exposure or immediately if symptoms develop during quarantine.

SPECIFIC Q & A:

Q: My child has a single symptom. Should I get my child tested for COVID?

A: It depends. First, please consider the following questions:

1. Does your child have any other symptoms or any of the **high-risk** symptoms of cough, difficulty breathing or loss of taste/smell?
2. Has there been close contact with someone with COVID? Close contact means having been less than 6 ft of someone with a confirmed or probable case of COVID for more than 15 minutes with 24 hours. This exposure can occur regardless of whether masks were worn by one or both parties and can occur indoors or outdoors.

If you answered YES to either question, please contact your health care provider for advice regarding getting tested for COVID. Please see the questions further below for gaining access to a COVID testing information.

If you answered NO to both questions, your child may return to school 24 hours after their symptoms have gone away or if they have a note from their doctor clearing them for school.

Q: My child woke up with a cough. Can I still send my child to school?

A: No, please do not send your child to school until they are seen by a health care provider who may request COVID testing. A cough is a high-risk symptom for COVID. Cough can also be present with many other conditions such as asthma, allergies, other viral infections, and more. If your child has had no known exposure and the cough is not infectious your health care provider will write a note permitting your child to go to school.

If they develop a cough after known exposure to someone with COVID, they should visit their health care provider. The health care provider will need to determine the cause of the cough and the risk for COVID with a COVID test. With any symptoms, following a known exposure, the child will likely need to isolate at home for 10 days.



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Q: My child woke up with a fever. Can I still send my child to school?

A: No. Fever is a sign of infection. We don't want kids with infections in school. Please do not send your child to school until they are fever free for at least 24 hours. If no known exposure has occurred, your health care provider can write a note that clears your child and allows them to attend school when their fever has subsided. If your child starts to have other symptoms in addition to the fever, your healthcare provider will likely recommend a COVID test.

If your child has a fever after known exposure to someone with COVID, they should visit their health care provider. The health care provider will need to determine the cause of the fever and the risk for COVID with a COVID test. Based on the evaluation results, please see the Student Symptom Decision Tree for information about the next steps and when your child may return to school.

Q: My child woke up with nasal congestion. Can I still send my child to school?

A: No. Nasal congestion can be a symptom of allergies, general viral infection or COVID. A child with a history of allergies may be ok to return to school with nasal congestion but should first be evaluated by their health care provider to determine if there is an infection present. The health care provider will examine your child and use their clinical expertise to decide to do a COVID test, other viral test or simply make an alternative diagnosis.

If your child develops congestion after known exposure to someone with COVID or starts to have other symptoms, they should visit their health care provider. Your health care provider will determine the cause of the congestion and the risk for COVID with a COVID test. Based on the evaluation results, please see the Student Symptom Decision Tree for information about the next steps and when your child may return to school.

Q: My child has symptoms related to allergies. They are being sent home by the school and being asked to get tested. Are they required to have a note from their primary care provider?

A: If your child has two symptoms or more such as congestion, runny nose, sore throat or cough related to allergies, a COVID test may be advised per the Student Symptom Decision Tree. Alternatively, your health care provider may write a note for school that explains your child has an alternative diagnosis (e.g., allergies) to COVID that will allow them to return to school.

Q: My child has been exposed to COVID at school. When and where do I go get COVID testing? Is testing at home, OK?

A: If your child is well and a visit with a health care provider is not necessary, several options are available for FDA-approved testing. You may do any of the following:

1. Visit your health care provider and receive on-site testing at a health care facility.
2. Use FDA-approved testing kits that are distributed by your school. In this case, parents may take the school-provided test home and then submit the sample to a lab for results.
3. Receive a FREE medical assessment and test through members of the OC COVID Testing Network. To find an OC COVID testing network member near you, please refer to this website: [OC COVID-19 Testing Network](https://www.ocaliforniahealthinfo.org/oc-covid-19-testing-network) (ocaliforniahealthinfo.com).
4. At home test kits that do not provide laboratory confirmed results are not acceptable.

If your child is ill, please consult your health care provider as an office visit may be needed. The health care provider will likely provide COVID testing on site.

Q: My unvaccinated child has been exposed to COVID at school. Both children were wearing a mask. When can my child return to school?



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A: If your unvaccinated child has no symptoms, they may return to school immediately in what is referred to as a modified quarantine. In a modified quarantine, your child can participate in the required instructional components of the day, but they must wear a mask indoors and outdoors for 14 days. Their face covering may be removed while eating. In addition, your child may not participate in any extracurricular activities within the school settings for 14 days following their COVID exposure. A condition of being able to attend school is that your child must take two tests for COVID within the first 10 days of exposure, three days apart, preferably between days 3 and 6 following exposure.

Please note, if your child is not able to complete the required testing, modified quarantine is not an option, and they should stay home for 10 days.

If symptoms of COVID develop after an exposure, they should isolate at home for 10 days, regardless of whether they receive a positive or negative COVID lab-confirmed test. Please see a health care physician for care.

Q: My unvaccinated child has been exposed to COVID at school. They do not have any symptoms. One or neither children were wearing a mask. When can my child return to school?

A: In this case, your child should stay home for 7 days and return on day 8 if they had a negative COVID test on or after day 5 from last exposure. Upon return to school, they should mask indoors and outdoors for 14 days from the last exposure. Your child can participate in required instructional components of the day, but no participation in extracurricular activities at school is allowed, including sports and activities within the community setting for 14 days following last exposure. If testing is not completed, isolation for 10 days at home is required. Please see a health care physician for care.

Q. My unvaccinated or vaccinated child has been exposed to COVID at school. They have symptoms. When can my child return to school?

A: If your unvaccinated child has symptoms of COVID after an exposure, they should isolate at home for 10 days, regardless of whether they receive a positive or negative COVID lab-confirmed test. Please see a health care physician for care.

If your vaccinated child has symptoms of COVID after exposure, they should get a COVID test and get care. Once they receive a lab confirmed negative COVID test on or after day 5, they may return after day 7 (day 8). Upon return to school, they should mask indoors and outdoors for 14 days from the last exposure. No participation in extracurricular activities at school, including sports and activities within the community setting for 14 days following last exposure.

Q: My child has COVID. How do I isolate or quarantine my child from the rest of the family?

A: Great question. For a most comprehensive answer, please refer to CDC guidelines ([COVID19 - Caring for someone at home | CDC](#)). Also, here are a few helpful tips, depending on your circumstances:

- If unvaccinated and your child tests positive for COVID following an exposure, your child should not share a room or bathroom with others, if possible. Wipe down all high-touch surfaces with disinfectant wipes. Suppose the unvaccinated child can't isolate within the home. In that case, the entire family will need to quarantine for 10 days after the child's isolation is completed.

*****A FRIENDLY REMINDER: Please continue to make well-child care a priority, including following guidelines re mask wearing and regular vaccinations*****

Disclaimer: This guidance is based on current evidence and best data at the time of publication and is not intended to replace the health care provider's judgment or establish a protocol for all patients with a particular condition (9-8-2021).