# COVID-19

*When a student, faculty or staff member can return to school*

Indiana Department of Health

Aug. 25, 2020

Dear School Officials and Healthcare Providers:

The Indiana Department of Health is updating current guidance when a student or faculty/staff member can return to school due to COVID-19. This response requires being nimble to changing guidelines and recommendations, and more updates are expected in the future. The state health department greatly appreciates your understanding and vigilance.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this update is to assist school healthcare staff and public health officials in determining if a student or faculty/staff member needs to be excluded from the facility for COVID-19 quarantine or isolation. The chart uses three criteria to determine this: close contact, symptoms, and COVID-19 test status.

**How to use:** First, determine if the individual was a close contact to a COVID-19 case based on the definition below and then selecting the appropriate chart on the next page. Second, determine if the individual is showing symptoms of COVID-19 (symptomatic) or not. Finally, determine if the individual was tested for COVID-19 and the result of the test. Key definitions are provided below.

## Definitions:

**Isolation** means keeping sick people away from healthy ones. For COVID-19, this means that the sick person stays in a separate bedroom or separate area of the home and stays away from others. This includes staying home from school and any activities. Currently, guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that COVID-19 positive people with symptoms isolate for 10 days from the start of their symptoms, be fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and show improvement of symptoms. Individuals who test positive without symptoms should isolate for 10 days from the date their sample was collected.

**Quarantine** means separating people who were exposed to someone who was sick. Since people who were around other sick people are more likely to get sick themselves, quarantine prevents them from unintentionally spreading the virus to other people even before they realize they are sick. Usually people who are in quarantine stay at home and avoid going out or being around other people. This includes staying home from school and other activities. Currently, the CDC advises that close contacts of COVID-19 positive people quarantine for 14 days after the last exposure with the COVID-19 positive person, even if they have a negative test.

**Close contact:** An individual is considered a close contact if **any** of following is true:

- You were within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more. This could be a single encounter of more than 15 minutes or multiple encounters within a single day that add up to more than 15 minutes.
- You provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19
- You had direct physical contact with the person (hugged or kissed them)
- You shared eating or drinking utensils
- They sneezed, coughed or somehow got respiratory droplets on you

Keep in mind that anyone who lives with or stayed overnight for at least one night in a household with the infected person while he or she was infectious is at highest risk.

These close contact criteria apply regardless of mask use, face shields, or physical barriers, such as Plexiglas or plastic barriers. The only exception is if a healthcare worker in a school setting is wearing the proper personal protective equipment. When an individual's symptom, contact, or test status changes, their quarantine or isolation requirements should be reassessed.

Fundamentally, a close contact is anyone you think has had enough exposure to transmit infection.

**Update on Symptoms Consistent with COVID-19:**

If a child, faculty or staff member has any of the following symptoms, that indicates a possible illness that may put them at risk for spreading illness to others.

- Temperature 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher when taken by mouth (or school board policy if threshold is lower)
- Sore throat
- New uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing (for students with chronic allergic/ asthmatic cough, a change in their cough from baseline)
- Diarrhea, vomiting or abdominal pain
- New onset of severe headache, especially with a fever
- Loss of taste or smell

**Update on Quarantine of Siblings and Household Members:**

If a student, faculty or staff member has symptoms of COVID-19 as described above and tests positive or does **NOT** get tested for COVID-19, then siblings and household members should be considered close contacts and advised to quarantine. If the symptomatic person is diagnosed with another condition that explains the symptoms, or tests negative, then no quarantine for close contacts is necessary, but a provider's note with alternate diagnosis will be needed to return to school.

A symptomatic student, faculty or staff member and anyone living in their household should quarantine while waiting for test results.

**Update on When a Student or Faculty/Staff Can Return to School:**

If a student, faculty or staff member is symptomatic (according to the above definition), NOT tested for COVID-19 and NOT a close contact of a COVID-19 positive person:

- The individual must remain at home for at least 10 days from the start of symptoms, be fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications and show improvement of symptoms. Siblings and household contacts should be considered close contacts and quarantine for 14 days. Students do not need a note for return to school and should be allowed to return at the end of the recommended isolation.
- Individuals with an alternate diagnosis (such as an ear or urinary tract infection) do not need to isolate but will need a note from a healthcare provider saying "student may return to school on [date] and his/her illness was not related to COVID-19" or "Cleared to return to School." No diagnosis should be listed, as that is a HIPAA violation.

Symptomatic according to the above definition and tested NEGATIVE for COVID-19 and NOT a close contact of a COVID-19 positive person:

- The individual must be 24 hours fever-free without the use of fever-reducing medication and show improvement of symptoms, unless advised otherwise by a healthcare provider. The individual does not need an alternate diagnosis.
- Close contacts do not need to quarantine.

Symptomatic and tested POSITIVE for COVID-19 (whether or not a close contact):

- The individual must isolate at home for at least 10 days, be 24 hours fever-free without the use of fever reducing medications and show improvement of symptoms.
- Siblings, household contacts and other close contacts need to quarantine for 14 days after the last exposure to the positive person.
- Repeat testing is NOT recommended for deciding when people can return to work or school.

Symptomatic and NOT tested for COVID-19 and IS a known close contact of a COVID-19 case:

- The individual must quarantine for 14 days after the last contact with the COVID-19 positive person. If the exposure is to a household member and the case cannot properly isolate away from others at home, the last date of contact may be the last day of isolation for the case.
- The individual must also isolate at home for at least 10 days, be 24 hours fever-free without the use of fever reducing medications and show improvement of symptoms.
- The criteria for both must be met prior to the person returning to school.
- Siblings, household members and other close contacts must quarantine.

Symptomatic and tested NEGATIVE and IS a known close contact of a COVID-19 positive person:

- The individual must quarantine for 14 days after the last contact with the COVID-19 positive person. If the exposure is to a household member and the case cannot properly isolate away from others at home, the last date of contact may be the last day of isolation for the case.
- The individual must be 24 hours fever free without the use of fever-reducing medications. An alternate diagnosis is not required.
- The criteria of both need to be met before returning to school.

NO symptoms and was NOT tested for COVID-19:

- May attend school.

NO symptoms and tested NEGATIVE for COVID-19 and IS NOT a known close contact of a COVID-19 positive person:

- May attend school.

NO symptoms and tested POSITIVE for COVID-19 and whether or not a close contact of a COVID-19 positive person:

- Must isolate at home for 10 days after the date the sample was collected.
- Siblings, household members, and other close contacts must quarantine for 14 days from the last date of exposure before returning to school. If the exposure is a household member and the case cannot properly isolate away from others at home, the last date of contact may be the last date of isolation for the case.

NO symptoms and not tested for COVID-19 and IS a known close contact of a COVID-19 positive person:

- Must quarantine for 14 days from the last date of exposure before returning to school. If the exposure is a household member and the case cannot properly isolate away from others at home, the last date of contact may be the last date of isolation for the case.

NO symptoms and tested negative for COVID-19 and IS a known close contact of a COVID-19 positive person;

- Must quarantine for 14 days from the last date of exposure before returning to school. If the exposure is a household member and the case cannot properly isolate away from others at home, the last date of contact may be the last date of isolation for the case.