RETURN TO SCHOOL/WORK FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF



Students and staff members who have been excluded from school/work based on the outcome of official COVID-19 procedures may return to school/work in accordance with guidance found in the StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit (K-12), to be used in conjunction with medically-based guidance provided by the Duplin County Health Department Communicable Disease experts. A negative COVID-19 test is not required for an individual to return from exclusion. The Duplin County Health Department and/or physician's orders make the final determination for when students and staff members may return to school or work.

Guidance for Students/Staff Members to Return to School/Work

(based on NCDHHS and Duplin County Health Department recommendations)

Exclusion Category	Scenario	Criteria to Return to the School
Diagnosis	Person has tested positive with an antigen test but does not have symptoms of COVID-19 and is not known to be a close contact to someone diagnosed with COVID-19.	If the person has a repeat PCR/molecular test performed in a laboratory within 24-48 hours of their positive antigen test, and that PCR/molecular test is negative: the positive antigen test can be considered a false positive and the person can immediately return to school; OR If the person does not have a repeat PCR/molecular test, or has one within 24-48 hours and it is also positive, the person can return to school 5 days after the specimen collection date of the first positive test, as long as they did not develop symptoms. The person must continue to mask for an additional 5 days to minimize risk of infecting others, unless an exemption to mask use applies. The person is not required to have documentation of a negative test in order to return to school.
Diagnosis	Person has tested positive with a PCR/molecular test but the person does not have symptoms.	Person can return to school 5 days after the specimen collection date of their positive test as long as they did not develop symptoms. The person must continue to mask for an additional 5 days to minimize risk of infecting others, unless an exemption to mask use applies. The person is not required to have documentation of a negative test in order to return to school.
Symptoms	Person has symptoms of COVID-19 and has tested positive with an antigen test or PCR/molecular test.	Person can return to school when • It has been 5 days since the first day of symptoms; AND • It has been at least 24 hours since the person had a fever (without using fever reducing medicine); AND • Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving. The person is not required to have documentation of a negative test in order to return to school. The person must continue to mask for 10 days after the first day of symptoms to minimize risk of infecting others, unless an exemption to mask use applies.

Symptoms	Person has symptoms of COVID-19 but has **not** been tested for COVID-19 nor has visited a health care provider. Therefore, the person who has symptoms is presumed positive for COVID-19 due to the presence of a clinically compatible illness in the absence of testing.	Person can return to school when • It has been 5 days since the first day of symptoms; AND • It has been at least 24 hours since the person had a fever (without using fever reducing medicine); AND • Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving. The person is not required to have documentation of a negative test in order to return to school. The person must continue to mask for 10 days after the first day of symptoms to minimize risk of infecting others, unless an exemption to mask use applies.
Symptoms	Person has symptoms of COVID-19 but has received a negative PCR/molecular test for COVID-19 or has visited a health care provider and received an alternative diagnosis that would explain the symptoms of COVID-19. (As recommended by the Duplin County Health Department)	Person can return to school when • It has been at least 24 hours since the person had a fever (without using fever reducing medicine); AND • They have felt well for at least 24 hours. Note: The health provider is not required to detail the specifics of the alternate diagnosis.

*For individuals exposed, day of exposure is considered day zero (0). For cases, day of symptom onset is day zero (0) or for individuals without symptoms, day of specimen collection is considered day zero (0).

NOTES:

- **Duplin County Schools will follow quarantine recommendations provided by the Duplin County Health Department.**
- **Results from a home-based COVID-19 test will not be accepted when making quarantine determinations for staff. However, any staff member with a COVID-19 diagnosis or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should contact their supervisor and/or school nurse.**