



COVID-19

To maximize protection from the [Delta variant](#) and prevent possibly spreading it to others, get vaccinated as soon as you can and wear a mask indoors in public if you are in [an area of substantial or high transmission](#).

Overview of COVID-19 Quarantine for K-12 Schools

Updated Sept. 28, 2021

[Print](#)

What is quarantine?


Quarantine is a strategy used to prevent transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, by ensuring that unvaccinated people who have been in [close contact](#) with someone with COVID-19 stay apart from others.

You **quarantine** when you have been exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19 and are not vaccinated.

[Quarantine](#) means staying home for 14 days after you are exposed to someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19. This is because you can be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 but may not show symptoms for up to 14 days. Even though you may not show symptoms, you can still spread the virus.

Quarantine is different from **isolation**. [Isolation](#) is used by someone who has symptoms of COVID-19, or tests positive for the virus that causes COVID-19, even if they don't have symptoms. Isolation helps prevent transmission of the virus by separating people infected with the virus from those who are not infected. If someone takes a diagnostic test for COVID-19 and tests positive for COVID-19, or develops symptoms of COVID-19 regardless of whether or not they have tested positive for COVID-19 while in quarantine, their status will shift from quarantine to isolation.

Who needs to quarantine?

People who are not [fully vaccinated](#) and are determined to be a [close contact](#) of someone with COVID-19 need to [quarantine](#). Please refer to the [Decision Tree for Identifying COVID-19 Close Contacts](#)  [111 KB, 1 page] to help determine who is a close contact.

They should:

- Get tested immediately and [quarantine](#) (stay at home and away from other people) immediately for a period of 14 days from the date of their last exposure, unless they receive different instructions from their school official or a public health official.
- If they initially test negative, test again 5-7 days after the date of their last known exposure and continue to [quarantine](#) for the full 14 days. If they initially test negative, test again 5-7 days after the date of their last known exposure to determine if they have developed COVID-19 as early as possible. If this test is negative, continue to quarantine for the remainder of the 14-day quarantine period. [Isolate](#) immediately if they develop [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 or test positive and notify the school so that the school can conduct any necessary contact tracing.
- If the person who is quarantining does not develop symptoms of COVID-19 and does not test positive or is not tested, that person can go back into public spaces, including school, on day 15.

Who does NOT need to quarantine?

- People who have tested positive for COVID-19 on a [viral test](#) within the past 90 days **and** have subsequently recovered **and** remain without COVID-19 symptoms *do not* need to [quarantine](#). However, close contacts with prior COVID-19 infection in the previous 90 days should:
 - [Wear a mask](#) indoors in public for 14 days after exposure.
 - Monitor for [COVID-19 symptoms](#) and [isolate](#) immediately if symptoms develop
 - Consult with a healthcare professional for testing recommendations if new symptoms develop.
- People who are [fully vaccinated](#) *do not* need to [quarantine](#) if they come into [close contact](#) with someone diagnosed with COVID-19. They should:
 - Get tested 3–5 days after their last known exposure—even if they don’t have symptoms.
 - Wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following their last exposure or until their test result is negative.
 - Monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days and get tested and isolate immediately if they develop [symptoms](#) of COVID-19.

Even though fully vaccinated people and people with prior infection in the past 90 days who are determined to be a close contact are not required to [quarantine](#), they are expected to wear a mask for 14 days indoors in public, or for fully vaccinated people, until they have a negative test. Please note that everyone, regardless of vaccination status, should wear a mask in areas of substantial to high transmission in indoor public settings, whether or not they have been exposed. Everyone should also wear a [mask in K–12 schools](#) at all times, regardless of vaccination status and the level of community transmission. The school should ensure there is a plan for fully vaccinated close contacts to stay masked at all times indoors. During times in the school day when students or staff members may typically remove masks indoors (such as during lunches, snacks, band practice, etc.), have a plan for them to adequately distance from others and ensure they wear their masks when not actively participating in these activities (such as when they are not actively eating).

What should a student or staff member who is unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated do during quarantine?

A person who is asked to [quarantine](#) because they are not vaccinated and determined to be a close contact should take the following steps:

- Get tested for COVID-19 immediately. If they test positive for COVID-19, they should notify the school and switch from quarantine to isolation. The 10-day [isolation](#) period should begin from the day symptoms began, or if they do not have symptoms, from the date of their positive test.
- Stay home for 14 days after the date of their last known exposure to a person diagnosed with COVID-19. The day of exposure counts as day 0. The day after their last known exposure is day 1 of the 14-day period. If the person who is quarantining does not develop symptoms of COVID-19 and does not test positive, that person can go back into public spaces, including school, on day 15.
- If possible, stay away from people they live with, especially people who are at [higher risk](#) for getting very sick from COVID-19. If the quarantining person is a young child, a family might select a single other individual within the household to be the primary caregiver for the child and ask that designated [caregiver](#) to also stay away from the other individuals in the home.
- If they cannot separate from other people in the household, wear a [mask](#) at all times during quarantine, including within the household.
- Watch for [symptoms](#) for a full 14 days after the date of their last known exposure. If they develop symptoms of COVID-19, immediately [isolate](#), regardless of vaccination status, and contact the local public health authority or healthcare provider to be tested. If they test positive, notify the school for any additional contact tracing that may be required and for any school-specific instructions on isolation.

Can a student or staff member continue to go to school while in quarantine?

No. CDC recommends students and staff who are asked to [quarantine](#) should not go to school or school events in-person during their quarantine period.

What activities can a student or staff member participate in while in quarantine?

A student or staff member should participate in only online or virtual school activities during their [quarantine](#) period. They may complete work or assignments from home during this time, depending on how well they feel. They can engage with other students, teachers, or staff through phone conversations, online meetings, or fully virtual engagement.

It is important for a student or staff member in [quarantine](#) to remain at home, separated from other people as much as possible, during the entire quarantine period. They should not attend other extra-curricular or social activities while they are in quarantine. They should not participate in activities like sporting events, play dates, parties, social and family gatherings, music or theater performances, and other events where they may come into contact with other people. To prevent other people from possibly getting COVID-19, make every effort to limit the person's contact with other people, including members of their household, while they are in quarantine, even if the person is wearing a mask.

Related Pages

- › [When to Quarantine](#)
- › [Test for Current Infection](#)
- › [How to Protect Yourself & Others](#)
- › [COVID-19 Contact Tracing](#)
- › [What to Do If You Are Sick](#)

Last Updated Sept. 28, 2021