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## COVID-19

# Overview of COVID-19 Quarantine for K-12 Schools

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## What is quarantine?

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

People **quarantine** when they have been exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19, based on their vaccination and [booster](#) status or history of prior infection in the past 90 days.

[Quarantine](#) means staying home for at least 5 days after exposure to someone diagnosed with COVID-19. This is because someone can be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 but may not show symptoms. Even though someone may not show symptoms, they 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 SARS-CoV-2 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?

Students, teachers, and staff who came into [close contact](#) with someone with COVID-19 should [quarantine](#) for at least 5 days (day 0 through day 5) after their last close contact if they are in one of the following groups:

- People who are ages 18 and older and completed the [primary series](#) of recommended vaccine, but have not received a [recommended](#) booster shot when eligible.
- People who received the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine (completing the primary series) over 2 months ago and have not received a [recommended](#) booster shot.
- People who are not vaccinated or have not completed a [primary vaccine series](#).

These individuals could also be eligible for Test to Stay programs that would allow them to stay in the school setting during the quarantine period. Outside the school setting, quarantine recommendations would apply.

## Who does NOT need quarantine?

Students, teachers, and staff who came into close contact with someone with COVID-19 and are in one of the following groups do not need to quarantine:

- People who are ages 18 and older and have received all [recommended vaccine doses](#), including [boosters](#) and [additional primary shots](#) for some immunocompromised people.

- People who are ages 5–17 years and completed the [primary series](#) of COVID-19 vaccines.
- People who had confirmed COVID-19 within the last 90 days (tested positive using a [viral test](#)).

Everyone should wear a [well-fitting mask](#) around others for 10 days from the date of their last close contact with someone with COVID-19 (the date of last close contact is considered day 0). They should [get tested](#) at least 5 days after their last close contact with someone with COVID-19, unless they had confirmed COVID-19 in the last 90 days and subsequently recovered. For 10 days after their last exposure to someone with COVID-19, they should watch for fever (100.4°F or greater), cough, shortness of breath, or other COVID-19 symptoms. Those who test positive or develop COVID-19 symptoms should isolate from other people and follow recommendations for [isolation](#).

**CDC continues to recommend indoor masking in K-12 schools for all individuals ages 2 years and older, including students, teachers, staff, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status.** The school should ensure that there is a plan for people identified as close contacts to stay masked at all times indoors until 10 full days after their last close contact to someone with COVID-19. 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 do during quarantine?

People who are asked to [quarantine](#) should take the following steps:

- Stay home and away from other people for at least 5 days (day 0 through day 5) after their last close contact with a person who has COVID-19. The date of exposure is considered day 0. Wear a [well-fitting mask](#) when around others at home, if possible.
- For 10 days after their last close contact to someone with COVID-19, watch for fever (100.4°F or greater), cough, shortness of breath, or other [COVID-19 symptoms](#).
- If they develop symptoms, [get tested](#) immediately and isolate until they receive their test results. If they test positive, follow [isolation](#) recommendations.
- If they do not develop symptoms, [get tested](#) at least 5 days after they last had close contact with someone with COVID-19.
  - If they test negative, they can leave home, but continue to wear a [well-fitting mask](#) when around others at home and in public until 10 days after their last close contact with someone with COVID-19.
  - If they test positive, they should isolate for at least 5 days from the date of their positive test (if they do not have symptoms). If they do develop [COVID-19 symptoms](#), isolate for at least 5 days from the date their symptoms began (the date the symptoms started is day 0). Follow recommendations in the [isolation](#) section.
  - If they are unable to get a test 5 days after their last close contact with someone with COVID-19, they can leave their home after day 5 if they have been without [COVID-19 symptoms](#) throughout the 5-day period. Wear a [well-fitting mask](#) for 10 days after the date of last close contact when around others at home and in public.
  - Avoid people who are [immunocompromised or at high risk for severe disease](#), and nursing homes and other high-risk settings, until after at least 10 days.
- If possible, stay away from people they live with, especially people who are at [higher risk](#) for getting very sick from COVID-19, as well as others outside their home throughout the full 10 days after their last close contact with someone with COVID-19.
- If they are unable to quarantine, they should wear a [well-fitting mask](#) for 10 days when around others at home and in public.
- If they are unable to wear a mask when around others, they should continue to quarantine for 10 days.
- Avoid people who are [immunocompromised or at high risk for severe disease](#), and nursing homes and other high-risk settings, until after at least 10 days.

Please visit CDC's [COVID-19 Quarantine and Isolation](#) page for general guidance on quarantine.

# 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 unless they are participating in a school sponsored “[test-to-stay](#)” program.

## How should “Test to Stay” be implemented in light of the updated shortened quarantine and isolation timeframe?

Test to Stay (TTS) can be implemented by schools as an alternative to traditional quarantine at home by establishing testing protocols to perform at least two tests during the period between close contact notification/TTS enrollment and day 7 after exposure, with the last test occurring 5-7 days after last close contact with a person confirmed with COVID-19. For more information about TTS, visit [What You Should Know About COVID-19 Testing in Schools](#).

## 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](#)
- › [Steps for Determining Close Contact and Quarantine in K–12 Schools](#)

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