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Oregon Health Authority

COVID-19 in Schools - Guide for Caregivers, Parents and Families

This guide is a resource for caregivers, parents, and families. This guide is general, and your school or school district may have other resources to share with you. If your student tests positive for COVID-19 or is exposed to COVID-19 in school, this guide outlines steps you can take to help keep you and your community safe. This guide includes:

- Recommended public health guidance

- Resources you can access to help reduce the spread of COVID-19

Please keep this guide in an accessible place for your future reference. We suggest that you read through the entire guide and then decide on the best course of action for you and your student.

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When should students stay home from school?

- If they test positive for COVID-19, even if they do not have symptoms

- If they have symptoms of COVID-19

What does it mean to be fully vaccinated or up to date with COVID-19 vaccines?

Being fully vaccinated means that a person has received all the recommended doses of their primary vaccine series of COVID-19.

Being up to date means that a person has received all recommended doses of their primary vaccine series of COVID-19 AND all recommended booster doses.

Currently, COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for all individuals aged 6 months and older.

For more information on the recommended doses to be fully vaccinated or up to date with COVID-19 vaccines, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) COVID-19 Vaccines page.

What can I expect to hear from my child's school about COVID-19?

Your school may send a notification when your child may have been exposed to a case of COVID-19. Because contact tracing is no longer recommended in school settings, this notification does not necessarily mean your student was a close contact of the case. This notification reminds individuals to watch for symptoms of COVID-19 and can be used to

help you decide if any additional safety measures are best for your family, such as avoiding contact with individuals at increased risk of severe COVID-19. The school cannot share the identity of the individual who has COVID-19.

For more information about school guidance and protocols, visit

Oregon Department of Education's website:

[Oregon Department of Education - Planning for the 2022-23 School Year](#)

What does isolation mean?

Isolation means that someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or who has symptoms of COVID-19 stays home and stays away from other people in their home as much as possible. Isolation helps reduce the spread of COVID-19. Isolation recommendations include:

- Staying at home for at least 5 days after symptoms appeared, AND remaining home until fever-free for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medications, and other symptoms are improving. During this time, individuals isolating should try to stay away from other people in the home as much as possible. For example, they may stay alone in a bedroom or in another part of the home and use their own bathroom. If an individual with COVID-19 must use a shared space within the household (e.g., bathroom, kitchen), they should wear a well-fitting mask while in the space and clean the shared space after they are done using it.

- If someone has a positive COVID-19 test but does not have symptoms, isolation starts from the day the test was done. If someone has symptoms, isolation starts from the first day of symptoms.

- Individuals should wear a well-fitting mask around others at home, at school and in public for 5 additional days (day 6 through day 10) after the end of the 5-day isolation period.

- Have one person care for the individual with COVID-19, if possible. This caretaker should distance from other people in the house as much as possible, wear a face covering, and wash their hands often.

It may be difficult to isolate in the manner described here, so we encourage all households to follow this guidance as best they can. If you need support to follow these guidelines, please call 866-917-8881 or visit https://govstatus.egov.com/or-oha-covid-19-positive-test.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

People with COVID-19 can have a wide range of symptoms, ranging from mild to severe. Many individuals have no symptoms at all. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after being exposed to the virus. And, it is possible for someone with no symptoms to spread the virus to others.

Symptoms of COVID-19 are common with many other diseases. For this reason, symptoms are categorized as "primary" and "non-primary". Students displaying "primary" COVID-19 symptoms must be excluded from school. The length of exclusion will depend

on how many primary symptoms the student has and whether they have been tested for COVID-19.

If a student shows two or more of the primary symptoms at school, the school will send them home.

Primary symptoms of COVID-19:

- Cough

- Fever[1] or chills

- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

- New loss of taste or smell

Non-primary symptoms of COVID-19:

- Fatigue

- Muscle or body aches

- Headache

- Sore throat

- Nasal congestion or runny nose

- Nausea or vomiting

- Diarrhea

If a student has been exposed to someone who has COVID-19, what are recommended safety measures?

On March 12, 2022, the Oregon Health Authority paused quarantine for individuals identified as having been exposed to someone with COVID-19 for the general population, K-12 settings and childcare settings. You may learn about an exposure through a school notification or directly from the person who has COVID-19. Close contacts, regardless of their vaccination status, should watch for symptoms of COVID-19 for the 10 days following exposure. Additional precautions during the 10 days following exposure may be considered and include:

- Wearing a well-fitting mask around others, in particular individuals at increased risk of severe COVID-19 (e.g., individuals with underlying medical conditions or immunocompromised status, individuals age 65 and older, and those who live with individuals at increased risk)

- Avoiding unnecessary contact with individuals at increased risk of severe COVID-19

- Testing approximately five days following the exposure

If symptoms of COVID-19 develop, please stay home and seek testing for COVID-19.

[1] 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher

If you are looking for information about getting tested for COVID-19, visit:

[COVID-19 Testing In Oregon (govstatus.egov.com/or-oha-covid-19-testing)](govstatus.egov.com/or-oha-covid-19-testing)

If a student tests positive for COVID-19, how long should they isolate?

If they have symptoms of COVID-19, we ask they isolate at home for 5 days after symptoms started AND they have been fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication), with other symptoms improving. If they do not have symptoms, we ask they isolate at home for 5 days, starting after the date of their positive test.
A negative test is not needed to return to school. An isolation period looks like:

- **Day 0**: Symptoms start (or positive test if no symptoms) and isolation period begins
- **Day 1-5**: Isolation at home
- **Days 6-10**: Return to school if fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and other symptoms have improved. Wear a well-fitting mask for 5 additional days.

What if my student tests positive for COVID-19 but does not show symptoms?

Since it is possible for someone without symptoms to still spread the virus, we ask that they isolate at home and stay away from others in the home for 5 days.

What if someone in our household has COVID-19, but my student is not sick?

If your student does not have symptoms, they can continue to go to school. The household member should stay separated from others in the home for at least 5 days after symptoms or a positive test and wear a mask around others for 10 days. All household members should watch for COVID-19 like symptoms.

How can I talk with children about staying home from school and about COVID-19?

Children are naturally curious and may have many questions about COVID-19.

When speaking with children it is important to do the following:

- Do your best to stay calm and remain reassuring. Children will respond to what you say and how you say it.
- Make sure that children know that they can come to you when they have questions. Make time to speak with them, and have that time be as uninterrupted as possible.
- Be honest with them. When accurate information isn't available, children often think

of the worst-case scenario. Don't ignore their concerns and explain what you know.

- Avoid language that may lead to blame or stigma. Remind them that the virus can make anyone sick.

- Pay attention to what children hear on the television or radio and what they see online. Too much information focused on COVID-19 can cause children to experience anxiety.

- Teach children everyday actions to stop the spread of germs, like how to wash their hands and appropriate physical distancing behavior.

- Provide information that is honest, accurate and age appropriate. Make sure that you have conversations about things other than COVID-19.

- Keep yourself and your family safe by staying home when you're sick, covering your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, washing your hands often with soap and water and cleaning frequently touched surfaces and objects. Let children know that they play a very important role in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

For more information on how to talk with your children, visit:

Oregon Department of Education – How to Talk with Children About the Coronavirus

Document accessibility: For individuals with disabilities or individuals who speak a language other than English, OHA can provide information in alternate formats such as translations, large print, or braille. Contact the COVID-19 Communications Unit at 1-971-673-2411, 711 TTY or COVID19.LanguageAccess@dhsoha.state.or.us.

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