

Guidelines for Quarantine After Exposure in K-12 Classroom Settings

While great strides have been made in controlling the spread of COVID-19, the virus remains a threat, and the ongoing health and safety of K-12 students, staff, and volunteers remains paramount. **Ohio's goal is to keep K-12 students in school, in person five days a week. Students benefit cognitively, emotionally, and developmentally from in-person learning.**

This guidance can help guide quarantine decisions after a student or adult contact is exposed to someone with COVID-19 **in the classroom setting**.

As Ohio prepares to enter the 2021-22 academic year, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) recommends in its [COVID-19 Health and Prevention Guidance for Ohio K-12 Schools](#) following layered prevention strategies that were remarkably effective at controlling COVID-19 during the 2020-21 school year. These include strongly recommending vaccination for those who are eligible; strongly recommending use of face masks in K-12 settings, particularly for those who are not fully vaccinated; maximizing distance between people; prompt identification and providing appropriate care for people exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19; practicing good hygiene; and routine environmental cleaning and disinfection.

Modified quarantine procedures for K-12 schools

The K-12 school environment is a setting in which layered public health strategies have been shown to be effective at reducing spread of COVID-19. During the 2020-21 school year, Ohio modified standard quarantine procedures for K-12 students based upon studies and pilot evaluations, including the [Ohio Schools COVID-19 Evaluation](#), which is further supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) new Close Contact K-12 Exception. Modified quarantine procedures will continue as Ohio schools begin the 2021-22 school year. With layered prevention strategies in place, more students will be able to remain in the classroom and continue participating in sports and extra-curricular activities.

COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective at preventing severe illness; while some infections are expected to occur in fully vaccinated people, these breakthrough infections are typically mild. To help prevent the potential spread of COVID-19 and keep students in school, everyone should follow recommended prevention measures after possible exposure to COVID-19.

The below guidance can be used to address **COVID-19 exposures in K-12 in-person learning environments** and on required school transportation (e.g., school buses). Consult with your local health department if you have questions or concerns about quarantine procedures.

Please note that this guidance applies for **contacts** who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19. The person who tested positive for COVID-19 should follow standard isolation procedures.

- **Quarantine is not necessary** for students and adults possibly exposed to COVID-19 in K-12 school settings, regardless of vaccination status, if ALL the following prevention measures have been in place:
 - **Masking** for students and staff (regardless of vaccination status).
 - **Physical distancing** is maximized (at least 3 feet between desks).
 - Documented **COVID-19 prevention policies** (e.g., identification of individuals experiencing symptoms, strategies to increase ventilation, protocols for cleaning, etc.).

- If not all prevention measures listed above were in place, **quarantine is not necessary** for fully vaccinated* students and adults provided they adhere to the following precautions: Wear a mask indoors, as much as possible, either for 14 days or until a viral (PCR or antigen) test performed three to five days after exposure has come back as negative. In addition:
 - Self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days following exposure; unless symptoms develop, individuals can continue attending in-person class and participating in sports and extra-curricular activities.
 - Anyone with [symptoms of COVID-19](#) should isolate away from others and be evaluated for COVID-19. Testing for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) may be recommended in coordination with the local health department, school, healthcare provider, or parents/guardians.
 - If they test positive, they should isolate for at least 10 days from the date symptoms started (or the date of the positive test if they have no symptoms).
 - *Note: A person is considered fully vaccinated two weeks after receiving the second dose of a two-dose vaccine (Moderna or Pfizer vaccine) or two weeks after receiving a single-dose vaccine (Johnson & Johnson vaccine).

- If not all prevention measures listed above were in place, **quarantine is not necessary** for students and adults who are not fully vaccinated if the **person who was exposed** was wearing a **face mask** consistently and correctly and physical distancing was maintained. However, they should take the following precautions:
 - Wear a mask indoors, as much as possible, either for 14 days or until a viral (PCR or antigen) test performed at least five days after exposure has come back as negative. While this negative result would allow them to discontinue masking in school after day seven, we encourage them to continue masking.
 - Self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days following exposure; unless symptoms develop, individuals can continue attending in-person class and participating in sports and extra-curricular activities.
 - Anyone with [symptoms of COVID-19](#) should isolate away from others and be evaluated for COVID-19. Testing for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) may be recommended in coordination with the local health department, school, healthcare provider, or parents/guardians.
 - If they test positive, they should isolate for at least 10 days from the date symptoms started (or the date of the positive test if they have no symptoms).

Quarantine should be required if the student or teacher is not fully vaccinated, and layers of prevention were not in place as described above.

- **If quarantine is necessary because layers of prevention were not in place as described above**, it should last for at least seven days since the last exposure, and the contact should have a negative viral (PCR or antigen) test collected on or after day five. Individuals should watch for any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days.
 - During quarantine, contacts should be advised to stay home and away from others as much as possible.
 - If they become symptomatic at any point, they should receive clinical evaluation or testing for COVID-19.
- **The above guidelines for students and adults only apply to exposures occurring in classroom settings.** Individuals who are not fully vaccinated and exposed to COVID-19 outside of the school setting should refrain from attending in-person school and participating in organized sports or extracurriculars throughout their quarantine period.

Updated Aug. 5, 2021.

For additional information, visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.

For answers to your COVID-19 questions, call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634).

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. If you or a loved one are experiencing anxiety related to the coronavirus pandemic, help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call the COVID-19 CareLine at 1-800-720-9616.

For more information, visit: coronavirus.ohio.gov