

## **School COVID-19 Isolation, Quarantine, and Exposure FAQ**

### **Isolation**

#### **What is Isolation?**

Isolation means separating sick people with COVID-19 from people who are not sick.

#### **Who should be isolating themselves?**

Anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19. Anyone who has symptoms including a new fever, cough, shortness of breath, change in taste or smell, sore throat. [Additional Isolation Information](#)

#### **What is the period of isolation for someone with COVID-19?**

Persons with symptoms should isolate through 10 days after their symptoms started, as long as symptoms are improving by the 10th day. Persons who had a positive antigen or PCR test and never developed symptoms should isolate through 10 days after the test was collected. If a person was asymptomatic at time of a positive test, but later develop symptoms then the 10-day isolation starts from the day symptoms develop.

#### **Does a vaccinated person with COVID-19 symptoms need to isolate?**

Yes, and get tested. Stay in isolation until your test results are back. COVID-19 vaccines are very powerful but a small percentage of vaccinated persons could still get infected. If a vaccinated person with symptoms tests negative with a PCR test, we recommend that they stay home until their symptoms are resolved to avoid transmission of non-COVID illness.

### **Quarantine**

#### **What is Quarantine?**

Quarantine after an exposure means keeping a safe distance from others just in case symptoms begin at any point. It also means monitoring your health for symptoms. Quarantine is for people who are not sick, but who may have been exposed to the virus and may be at risk of transmitting illness to others. During quarantine, stay away from others until 14 days have passed since your last contact with someone who has or might have COVID-19. [Additional Quarantine Information](#)

#### **How long does my child need to quarantine?**

Public health recommends a full 14-day quarantine as the best way to reduce disease spread. However, CDC has two alternative options for shortening quarantine:

- Quarantine can end after Day 10 if no symptoms have developed during daily monitoring; a test is not required.
- Quarantine can end after Day 7 if no symptoms have developed during daily monitoring and if you have a negative molecular or antigen test. The test must be collected within 2 days of the planned end of quarantine (in other words, 5 days after exposure), and a negative test result must be back before ending quarantine.

- Under no circumstances should the quarantine end before 7 days have fully passed.

Quarantine will always begin on the day of last contact with someone who has or might have COVID-19. Additionally, your child's school may be utilizing one of the shortened quarantine options. Please check with your child's school for more information on their protocols.

**Why are we not requiring quarantine for routine classroom exposure?**

CDPHE and TCHD acknowledge the importance of in-person learning and aim to reduce in-person learning disruptions related to quarantine this school year. Public health strives to strike a balance between maintaining in-person classroom learning and setting an acceptable level of risk for COVID-19 transmission. Exposures in routine classroom settings are expected to have a lower risk especially in the context of universal masking. However, TCHD does recommend that schools send exposure notifications to families of children that were identified as a close contact within the classroom.

**Are students exposed in a lunchroom required to quarantine?**

At this time, TCHD is not requiring quarantine for an exposure that occurs in a lunchroom setting. However, if the investigation identifies further transmission related to the exposure, then TCHD could implement additional measures including quarantine.

**How does basketball in PE differ from after-school basketball in athletics or choir/band class differ from choir/band as an extracurricular activity?**

At this time, TCHD is not requiring quarantine for routine indoor physical education classes, or choir/band held within routine classes. Masking should be in place per TCHD's Public Health Order as an additive disease control measure. For children who participate in formal after-school sports, the duration and intensity of person-to-person contact and exposure is greater. Team activities likely include before and after play meetings, which can also pose a risk.

**What if someone in our home tests positive for COVID-19? How long do my children need to stay home from school/child care?**

Individuals who have an exposure to COVID-19 in their household are at high risk for infection. These individuals must quarantine from their date of last exposure to a positive case. The family should try as best as possible to separate the infected person from other household members (i.e. separate bedrooms, separate bathrooms, meal prep and eating on their own). However, if other family members cannot be adequately separated from the infected person, quarantine would start after the positive family member ends their 10-day isolation period.

Please refer to [CDC Quarantine Calendar](#)

**If my child has previously been diagnosed with COVID-19 and/or has received a positive antibody test do they need to quarantine if they are exposed during an outbreak in their school?**

If someone had a PCR or antigen test-confirmed COVID-19 infection during the 90 days prior to a new exposure, they do not need to quarantine but should monitor for symptoms for 14 days after their last date of contact. Antibody testing cannot be used to be excluded from quarantine; someone with a positive antibody test still needs to quarantine after an exposure.

**Can a symptomatic exposed person use a shortened quarantine (7- or 10-day option)?**

No. Any person exposed to COVID-19 who then develops symptoms is not eligible for shortened quarantine. Instead the person should begin isolation and get tested. If a PCR test taken after symptoms began is negative, the person still should quarantine for 14 days after the exposure.

**Is public health requiring quarantining unvaccinated adults that have a community exposure?**

If someone is unvaccinated and has community exposure then they need to quarantine. This applies to adults and children.

**Why do fully vaccinated individuals not have to quarantine after an exposure given the delta variant can be transmitted through vaccinated individuals?**

COVID-19 vaccines provide excellent protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death even from the delta variant. Vaccines also significantly reduce the risk of any COVID-19 infection, although effectiveness is lower. Vaccine breakthrough cases are expected, but overall the chance of a fully vaccinated person getting infected is extremely low. Therefore, CDC does not recommend fully vaccinated persons quarantine following an exposure, and instead they should get a test 5-7 days after the exposure, wear a mask until they have a negative test, and continue to monitor for symptoms.

**Are students exposed outside of school at club sports, home, sleepover etc. required to quarantine?**

Yes, those out-of-school settings are considered a high-risk exposure and quarantine is required. During a public health case investigation TCHD would instruct the positive case to let their contacts know they were exposed and to quarantine. Club sports send their own notification letters and outline quarantine to exposed players.

## **Exposures**

**What is a low-risk/classroom exposure?**

TCHD is implementing [CDPHE's Practical Guide for Operationalizing CDC's School Guidance](#). In a routine classroom with universal mask use, a COVID-19 exposure will not result in automatic quarantine. If cases increase in the same routine classroom setting, then additional measures including quarantine could be implemented. At the beginning of the 21-22 school year, TCHD chose to expand the definition of routine classroom to include the lunch room as well as physical education, or band/or choir class when the class takes place during regular school hours and not before or after school.

Although quarantine might not be implemented following an exposure in a routine classroom setting as defined above, TCHD expects that schools remain alert for additional cases in that classroom occurring up to 14 days after the initial positive staff/student began isolation. We recommend that schools send out an exposure notification outlining what the student/staff should do in school and at home following potential exposures in classroom settings. If a child does develop symptoms, we recommend testing ([free testing sites](#) can be found on our website). If a school identifies an outbreak (5 or more connected cases within a 14-day period, [Colorado COVID-19 Case and Outbreak Definitions](#)) contact tracing and quarantine are required for exposed unvaccinated close contacts. A school is required to report all positive COVID cases and outbreaks to local public health.

**What is a high-risk exposure?**

A high-risk exposure represents a setting where an exposure is much more likely to result in spread of disease, which often is settings of intense physical contact or activities associated with forced expiration. Examples of high-risk exposures include extracurricular activities outside the classroom setting, such as close contact sports (e.g. football, wrestling, basketball), indoor choir or band held outside classroom settings and aftercare programs held on school property (childcare, clubs etc.). Additionally, exposures in classrooms that do not adhere to the mask mandate resulting in many students being unmasked would be considered high risk.

**If students and teachers are wearing masks in a high-risk setting, is it still considered high risk?**

Someone exposed in a high-risk setting will need to quarantine regardless of mask use. There are two exceptions to quarantine: if the exposed person is fully vaccinated or has had a documented positive COVID-19 test within the previous 90 days, then quarantine is not required.

**How do I know if my child was a close contact for a routine classroom exposure?**

TCHD recommends that schools send exposure notifications to parents if their child is identified as a close contact in a routine classroom setting. This may vary depending on the school. Please check with your child's school to determine their protocols.

**Is TCHD responsible for contact tracing within the schools/child care setting?**

TCHD consults with school and child care partners regarding exposure and contact tracing assessments. However, schools and child care centers need to perform contact tracing themselves as their staff have the most accurate information to assess an exposure (such as classroom rosters, seating charts, etc.).

**How many cases has my school reported to Tri-County Health Department?**

A school/child care center is required to report all positive COVID cases to their local public health department. We do not report the number of individual cases associated with a particular school. TCHD reports all outbreaks to CDPHE, and data is available here [CDPHE Outbreak Data](#). Summary data on pediatric COVID-19 cases is also available here [TCHD Pediatric/School Data Dashboard](#).

**Is there a specific threshold for when a school would close because of a COVID-19 outbreak?**

No. When a school outbreak is first identified, TCHD works closely with the school or school district to ensure appropriate, enhanced disease control measures are in place and being followed. If despite those measures, the outbreak expands and there is evidence of widespread transmission, then TCHD would discuss the need for school closure. Factors that inform such a decision include: the number of cases in the school, implementation of mitigation measures, number of classrooms affected, etc. An overall school closure would be made in consultation with school leadership and TCHD if we think that is the most appropriate response to reduce in school transmission.