STAY SAFE MN

COVID-19 Attendance Guide for Parents and Families

Staying home when you are sick is one of our best ways to fight COVID-19. Keeping sick children and children who are exposed to COVID-19 away from others helps stop the spread of the virus to other children, staff, and the surrounding community. Parents and guardians can use this guide to understand when their child can attend school, youth programs, and child care during COVID-19.

Resources

- Home Screening Tool for COVID-19 Symptoms (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/homescreen.pdf)

Definitions

What is a close contact?

Close contact means being within 6 feet of someone with COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes.

Casual contact, such as passing someone in the grocery store, is low risk for spreading COVID-19.

What do isolation and quarantine mean?

These words are used by people in public health to describe what someone should do when they stay home because they have COVID-19 or have been exposed to it. Isolation and quarantine are public health actions that help stop the spread of germs and keep people safe.

Isolation means keeping sick people away from healthy people. The sick person stays home and tries to stay away from other people in their home as much as possible. Here are ways to do this at home:

- Choose one person to care for the sick child, if possible. This person should keep their distance from other people in the house as much as possible, and use a face covering, stay 6 feet apart, and wash their hand often.

- The person who is sick stays at home and away from other people who live there, as much as possible. They can stay in their own bedroom or another part of the home and use their own bathroom, as much as they can. They should stay out of areas where others gather, such as the kitchen and living room.

Quarantine means keeping people who are not sick yet, but who were exposed to a sick person, away from others. Someone can spread COVID-19 before they have symptoms. Quarantine stops them from accidentally spreading the virus to other people.

- Choose one person to care for the person in quarantine, if possible. This person should keep their distance from other people in the house as much as possible, and use a face covering, stay 6 feet apart, and wash their hand often.

- The person who is in quarantine should stay away from others. This means not participating in activities outside the home.

About COVID-19

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms of COVID-19 can look like many other illnesses children get. The symptoms for children can look different than symptoms for adults. Many children have no symptoms at all.

If a child or student has any of these symptoms, it could be COVID-19:

- **More common symptoms:** fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher; a new cough, or a cough that gets worse; difficulty or trouble breathing; and new loss of taste or smell. These are the symptoms seen most often among children who test positive for COVID-19. They may be the only symptoms that develop.

- **Less common symptoms:** sore throat; nausea; vomiting; diarrhea; chills; muscle pain; excessive fatigue (being very tired); a new or severe headache; and new nasal congestion or a runny nose. Many other childhood illnesses have these same symptoms.

Some children with COVID-19 have no symptoms. However, they still can give COVID-19 to others, even if they do not have symptoms.

How long does it take for symptoms to start?

It can take two to 14 days for someone to show symptoms of COVID-19 after being exposed to someone with the virus. This is called the incubation period. Some people have mild symptoms, some people get very sick, and some with COVID-19 have no symptoms at all. Someone who has no symptoms can still spread the virus.

Incubation period: this is the time it can take to get symptoms after having close contact with someone who has COVID-19. It can take anywhere from two to 14 days to show symptoms.

When must my child stay home?

Your child MUST stay home if they have at least one symptom from this list:

- Fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher
- New cough, or a cough gets worse
- Difficulty or trouble breathing
- New loss of taste or smell

Your child MUST stay home if they have at least two symptoms from this list, even if they do not have any symptoms from the first list above:

- Sore throat
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Excessive fatigue (being very tired)
- New or severe headache
- New nasal congestion or runny nose

If a child must stay home because they have symptoms, the other children living in the house need to stay home from school or child care, too (quarantine). This means they must not take part in activities outside of the home for at least 14 days, unless a COVID-19 test, a doctor, or some other health care provider finds that the child does not have COVID-19.

Your child must stay home if they test positive for COVID-19, but show no symptoms.

- They must stay at home and stay away from others in the home for 10 days (isolation), counting from the day after they were tested.

Your child must stay home if they have close contact with anyone who tests positive for COVID-19.

- Children who have close contact with someone with COVID-19 must stay home for at least 14 days (quarantine). They must stay home even if they do not have symptoms of COVID-19. Close contacts may include everyone they live with and people outside of the home, such as grandparents; aunts and uncles; or other children or adults at school, in the neighborhood, at church, at sports or social activities; or at any other place.

- Your child must stay home for 14 days (quarantine), even if they test negative for COVID-19, because they could develop COVID-19 for up to 14 days.

Your child must stay home if someone who lives in their house has symptoms of COVID-19 infection and is being tested.

- Children must stay home until test results are known.

- If someone in the household is being tested for COVID-19, but does not have symptoms, children may go to school or child care.

- In either case:

  - If the test result is negative, children can go to school or child care.

  - If the test result is positive, children must stay home for 14 days (quarantine), counting from the last day they had close contact with the person who tested positive.

How long does my child need to stay home if they have symptoms consistent with COVID-19, tested positive, or if a doctor said they likely have COVID-19?

If your child has symptoms, they must stay at home and away from others (in isolation) until **ALL THREE** of the following have happened:

- At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms started (even if they start to feel better) **AND**;

- They have not had a fever in the last 24 hours without using any medication to lower fever **AND**;

- Their symptoms have improved.

Siblings and household members are close contacts, so they also need to stay home and quarantine from all activities for at least 14 days. It is possible for them to develop COVID-19 during these 14 days; staying home prevents them from unknowingly spreading the virus in school, child care, or other settings.

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

When your child tests positive, but has no symptoms, they must stay at home and away from others in the home (isolation) for 10 days, counting from the day after they were tested.

Example: If a child is tested on Monday and gets positive test results on Wednesday, day one starts Tuesday, the day after their test. The child would be able to return to activities the following Friday. During the 10 days at home, your child must stay away from others. Even if the child does not have symptoms, they still can spread the virus.

Everyone else who lives in the house are close contacts. They need to stay home for at least 14 days (quarantine). It is possible for them to develop COVID-19 during these 14 days. Staying home stops them from spreading the virus in school, child care, and other settings without knowing it.

What if my child gets sick, but tests negative for COVID-19 and is not a close contact of anyone with COVID-19?

If your doctor or other health care provider tells you that your child has something other than COVID-19, such as the flu or strep throat, or if your child tests negative for COVID-19, then follow your health care provider's directions about when to return to school or child care.

All children must stay home while they are sick and should not return to school or child care until they feel well. This includes staying home for at least 24 hours after a fever is gone, without using fever-reducing medications.

In this situation, brothers, sisters, and other children who live in the house DO NOT need to stay home (quarantine) and can continue going to school or child care.

Close contacts

What if my child has close contact with someone with COVID-19 and does not get sick?

People who are exposed to COVID-19 as a close contact can get the disease anywhere from two to 14 days after their last contact with the infected person. This is called the incubation period. Your child must stay home 14 days (quarantine) in case they get sick with COVID-19. The 14 days starts from the day of their last contact with the person with COVID-19.

If during the 14 days your child has a COVID-19 test that is negative, they still must stay home for all 14 days. Some people do not get sick until day 12, 13, or 14. Some who are sick may not get symptoms, but they still can spread the disease. Waiting 14 days is the only way to be sure your child is not infected and cannot infect others.

Brothers, sisters, and other children who live in the house who are not close contacts to the COVID-19 case DO NOT need to stay home (quarantine) and can continue going to school or child care.

Should I get my child tested if they are a close contact of someone with COVID-19?

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) recommends that your child get tested if they are a close contact of someone with COVID-19. Parents should talk to their child's doctor or other health care provider to decide whether to test their child.

Getting tested does not shorten the time that they must stay home. Your child must stay home for 14 days (quarantine) from the last contact they had with the person who tested positive for COVID-19, even if the child tests negative.

If your child gets tested for COVID-19, it is best to wait until at least five to seven days after their last contact with the person who has COVID-19. This is how long it usually takes after being exposed to COVID-19 before someone shows they are infected.

- If the test result is negative, your child still needs stay home for the full 14 days, because they still could get sick.

- If the test result is positive, even without symptoms, they must stay at home and away from others (isolation) until ALL THREE of the following have happened:

  - At least 10 days must have passed since their symptoms started **AND**;

  - They have not had a fever in at least 24 hours without using any medication to lower fever **AND**;

  - They feel better.

> If anyone who lives in the house **has symptoms of COVID-19** and is being tested, children should stay home and must not attend school or child care until test results are known. If someone who lives in the house **does not have symptoms** and is being tested for COVID-19, children do not need to stay home and may go to school or child care. In either situation:
>
> - If the test result is negative, children can go back to school or child care.
>
> - If the test result is positive, children must stay home for 14 days (quarantine), counting from the last day they were exposed to the person with COVID-19.

What if my child has close contact with someone with COVID-19 and gets sick, but does not get tested for COVID-19?

Your child must stay home for 14 days (quarantine) from their last contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19. They must not do activities outside of the home.

If you decide not to have your child tested and your child gets symptoms of COVID-19 at any point during their 14 days at home, they must continue to stay home and stay away from others in the house (isolation) until all of the following have happened:

- At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms started **AND**;

- They have not had a fever in at least 24 hours without using any medication to lower fever **AND**;

- They feel better.

> Everyone who lives in the house must stay home for at least 14 days (quarantine), because they have been exposed to the virus. They still may get sick with the virus for up to 14 days. They must not do activities outside of the house.

Example:

- Day 1: your child is to stay home for 14 days, because they are a close contact. They must stay in the house (quarantine).

- Days 2-5: your child is well and remains at home.

- Day 6: your child gets symptoms of COVID-19.

- Day 7: because your child now has symptoms, they must now stay in the house and they must stay away from other people in the house for 10 days (isolation).

- Day 14: your child still must stay home, because they are sick with COVID-19 symptoms. They must stay away from others in the house.

- Day 17: if your child is free of fever and they feel better, they no longer must stay away from other people in the house.

- Day 18: your child goes back to school or child care.

How do I know if my child was a close contact of someone with COVID-19 at school, child care, or another program?

Your child's school, child care, or program tells you if your child is a close contact of someone who has COVID-19. MDH works with local public health and tribal health departments and your school and/or school district, child care, or program to learn who has COVID-19 and who their close contacts are.

What if a parent has COVID-19 and is not able to separate themselves from their children?

Sometimes it is hard for parents to separate themselves from others in the house and take care of children at the same time. If a sick parent has close contact with their children, the children are at risk of getting COVID-19. The children must stay home for at least 10 days, along with their parent.

The parent with COVID-19 may leave the house only after 10 days, and then only after the parent feels better and has no fever for 24 hours without taking medicine that lowers fevers. Their children must then stay home for another 14 days (quarantine), in case they get symptoms of COVID-19. This means children are out of school for 24 days, unless they get sick or test positive for COVID-19. Work with your child's school to arrange distance learning during this time.

Tips for talking with children

How do I talk with my child about staying home from school and COVID-19?

- Remind them that staying home is another way to protect their friends, teacher, child care provider, and others in their community.

- Stay calm while talking. Take time to listen and talk.

- Let them know you are doing everything you can to keep them safe and that it is OK to feel upset.

- Be careful not to blame them or anyone else for COVID-19. Listen to and ask them what they are hearing from other children or adults.

- Watch how much they look at media and what media they see. Talk to them about what they see.

- Help them understand that this is the new normal during the pandemic and that it is happening to everyone.

- Give them truthful information that is right for their age and development.

- Review Daily Life & Coping: COVID-19 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/cope.html).

Resources

- COVID-19 Decision Tree for People in Schools, Youth, and Child Care Programs (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf)

- Minnesota Department of Education: Supporting Students and Families COVID-19 Resources (education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/health/covid19/supstucovid19/index.htm)

- Minnesota COVID-19 Response: Get Help (mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/get-help/index.jsp)