

# Returning to School COVID-19

## INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

COVID-19 is still spreading in Wisconsin communities—which means it is still a threat to your health. We care about you and your family’s health. So while the virus is still new, we worked with our state, local, and federal partners to give you the best information we have.

### What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- **Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing\***
- **New loss of taste or smell\***
- **Cough\***
- Fever (at least 100.0°F)
- Headache
- Chills
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Fatigue
- Nausea or vomiting
- Muscle or body aches
- Diarrhea

Your student is considered symptomatic if they have one of the symptoms marked with a (\*) or two of the other symptoms above baseline for them: As we learn more about the symptoms of COVID-19, we continue to update the list. For the most up-to-date list of symptoms, visit [www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/%20covid-19/symptoms.htm](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/%20covid-19/symptoms.htm).

### What steps can I take to prevent my student from getting COVID-19?

You can talk with your student about taking everyday steps to prevent getting sick:

- Help them to wash their hands often.
- Help them to avoid close contact with people who are sick, even inside your own home.
- Remind them to stay 6 feet apart from other people.
- Cover their mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when they are around others, if they are able to do so safely.
- Teach your students to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily.
- Help your student monitor their health—look for symptoms and take their temperature daily.

### How long does it take for symptoms to start?

It can take up to 14 days for people with COVID-19 to start showing symptoms. Some people have very mild symptoms, some people become really sick, and some people with COVID-19 don’t have any symptoms at all.

### When should my student stay home?

Your student should stay home if they are symptomatic or have been tested for COVID-19 (while waiting for the results). Your student is considered symptomatic if they have one of the symptoms marked with a (\*) or two of the other symptoms above baseline for them:

- **Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing\***
- **New loss of taste or smell\***

- **Cough\***
- Fever (at least 100.0°F)
- Headache
- Chills
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Fatigue
- Nausea or vomiting
- Muscle or body aches
- Diarrhea

### **Why does my student need to stay home?**

Keeping ill students, and students who have been exposed to COVID-19, away from others can stop the spread of the virus. It is possible for people who do not have symptoms to spread the virus to others. To help schools track any potential outbreaks, families and caregivers should notify their student's school if they are staying home from school because they are sick with symptoms of COVID-19 or if they have been exposed to COVID-19, and describe their symptoms if they have any.

### **What does isolation and quarantine mean?**

These are terms that public health scientists use to describe why someone needs to stay home. They are public safety tools that have been around for centuries to stop the spread of germs.

- **Isolation** means keeping sick people away from healthy ones. This usually means that the sick person rests in their own bedroom or area of your home and keeps away from others as best as possible.
- **Quarantine** means separating people who were exposed to a sick person away from others. Because someone can spread COVID-19 before they have symptoms, quarantine stops them from accidentally spreading the virus to other healthy people. Usually people who are in quarantine stay at home and avoid being around others.

### **How do I know if my student was around someone who was sick?**

Your local public health department has a system to tell whether someone should stay at home. Local public health staff will call you if your student falls into that group.

### **How long does my student need to stay home if they tested positive OR a doctor said they likely have COVID-19?**

If your student has symptoms they should stay at home and away from others as much as possible until all three of the following have happened:

1. At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms started and;
2. They have been fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications and;
3. Their cough or breathing problems get better.
4. Students do not need a negative test before returning to school.

### **What if my student tested positive for COVID-19, but doesn't show symptoms?**

They should stay home 10 days after the day they were tested and keep away from other people as much as possible. This is because even if they don't have symptoms, they can still spread the virus. Students do not need a negative test before returning to school.

### **What if my student becomes sick but isn't tested for COVID-19?**

They should stay home, in isolation, until they are feeling better and all the following have happened:

1. At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms started and:
2. They have been fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications and;
3. Their cough or breathing problems get better.
4. Students do not need a negative test before returning to school.

If they visit a doctor and they tell you that your student has something other than COVID-19 (like the flu or hand, foot, and mouth) then you should follow the doctor's guidelines for exclusion requirements for that disease. Review the [\*\*Wisconsin Childhood Communicable Diseases Wall Chart, P44397\*\*](#) for additional information.

### **What if my student becomes sick but tests negative for COVID-19?**

They should stay home until they are feeling better and they have been fever free for 24 hours without using any medication to reduce fever.

If they visit a doctor and they tell you that your student has something other than COVID-19 (like the flu or hand, foot, and mouth) then you should follow the doctor's guidelines for exclusion requirements for that disease. Review the [\*\*Wisconsin Childhood Communicable Diseases Wall Chart, P44397\*\*](#) for additional information.

### **What is a "Close Contact"?**

**Close contact** with someone with COVID-19 makes you at higher risk for getting sick or spreading COVID-19. Examples of close contact are being within 6 feet of someone with COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes, sharing a drinking glass or eating utensil, physically touching the person or things that may have their germs on them like dirty tissues, or being coughed or sneezed on.

**Casual contact** like passing someone in the grocery store is low risk for spreading COVID-19.

### **What if my student came in "close contact" with someone who has COVID-19?**

They should stay home for 14 days since the last time they were around that person to see if they develop symptoms. If they do get symptoms, then:

1. Call their health care provider—if you don't have one, contact 211 to be connected to resources that can help you with this. Ask to get tested—or look for a [\*\*community testing site in your area\*\*](#). Follow instructions on how to best prevent the spread of illness and keep yourself, your loved ones, and your community safe. Many clinics in Wisconsin provide services for people with little or no insurance:
  - [\*\*Wisconsin Association of Free & Charitable Clinics\*\*](#)
  - [\*\*Federally Qualified Health Centers\*\*](#) are community-based organizations that provide comprehensive primary care and preventative care, regardless of their ability to pay.
  - [\*\*Rural health centers\*\*](#)
  - [\*\*Tribal health centers\*\*](#)
2. Ask to get tested.
3. Follow their instructions for staying home while you wait for the test results.

\*Note that receiving a negative test will not result in an earlier release from quarantine.

### **If my student is a "close contact" and there are other children in our home who do not have symptoms, should they stay home too, or continue coming to school?**

No, your other students may continue to go to work and school. If the child who was in close contact gets sick, then your other students should stay home.

### **What if we live with someone who has COVID-19?**

People who live together usually have close contact with each other. Everyone you live with should stay home until the all of following have happened:

1. The sick person gets better:
  - a. At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms started and;
  - b. They have been fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications and;
  - c. Their symptoms improve.
2. **PLUS** 14 days have passed since the sick person was better to see if other people in your home get symptoms.

### **What if my student that had “close contact” with someone with COVID-19 and gets sick but isn’t tested COVID-19?**

Your student should stay home and away from others as much as possible until they get better and all the following have happened:

1. At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms started and;
2. They have been fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications and;
3. Their symptoms improve.
4. **PLUS** 14 days have passed since they were last around the person with COVID-19.

### **What if my student had "close contact" with someone with COVID-19, gets sick, but tests negative for COVID-19?**

They must quarantine for 14 days after the last contact with the COVID-19 positive person. If they visit a doctor and they tell you your student has something other than COVID-19 (like the flu or hand, foot, and mouth) then you should also follow the doctor's guidelines for exclusion requirements for that disease. Review the [Wisconsin Childhood Communicable Disease Wall Chart](#) for additional information.

If they don't visit a doctor and have proof of another disease, they must stay home until all of the following have happened:

1. They have been fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications and;
2. Their symptoms improve.
3. At least 14 days have passed since they were around the person with COVID-19.

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

Here are some tips for talking with children:

- Remain calm while talking.
- Let them know they are safe and it is okay to feel upset.
- Make yourself available to listen and to talk.
- Avoid language that might blame or stigmatize others.
- Pay attention to what children see or hear on the media.
- Provide truthful and developmental appropriate information.
- Talk about new actions that may be taken at school to help protect your students and staff.

Visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and [Department of Public Instruction](#) for even more tips on talking with your children about COVID-19.

### **What learning opportunities are there for my student while they are staying home?**

Schools are expected to have a plan in place to offer alternative or distance learning for children who need to be absent from school due to illness or potential exposure. The expectations of participation in alternative learning for students who are sick compared to asymptomatic students who have been sent home due to potential exposure will be clarified.