

Returning to school

Answers to frequently asked questions about COVID-19 in schools

What will happen if a student or staff member develops signs of COVID-19? The role of Clark County Public Health in school-related outbreaks and exposures is to investigate and mitigate the spread of disease.

For every confirmed case, Public Health will at minimum evaluate whether the case was at school during their contagious period. If the answer is “yes,” Public Health will expand its investigation, which will likely involve the school and/or district. The Public Health investigation process and response will differ based on many factors, such as physical distancing, hygienic practices, the timeline of illness, and number people involved (extent of possible spread).

Please note that anyone confirmed to have COVID-19 will be asked to go into isolation (minimum 10 days). Those identified by Public Health as close contacts will be asked to quarantine for 14 days from their last exposure to the confirmed case. **Clark County Public Health will provide return to work/school letters for individuals who are quarantined or isolated for COVID-19.**

How does exposure to COVID-19 occur? You can get exposed when you come into direct contact with the secretions (droplets) of someone who has COVID-19 (being coughed or sneezed on, kissing, sharing utensils, etc.). People often get exposed by a household member or through close contact with another person. Some people get COVID-19 without knowing how they were exposed.

What should I do if my child had close contact with someone with COVID-19 while they were ill, but my child is not sick? You should monitor your child for



Clark County Public Health
schools COVID-19 response team

564.397.8182

COVID@clark.wa.gov

www.clark.wa.gov/public-health/novel-coronavirus



fever, cough and shortness of breath (please see list below for additional symptoms) during the 14 days after the last day they were in close contact with the person with COVID-19. Your child should remain home in quarantine, do **NOT** send your child to school and avoid all public places for 14 days. Your family may be contacted for a public health interview.

Watch for COVID-19 symptoms

People with COVID-19 have reported a wide range of symptoms – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear **2-14 days after exposure to the virus**. This list does not include all possible symptoms:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

What should I do if my child was in close contact with someone with COVID-19 and gets sick? If your child was in contact with someone with COVID-19 and gets sick with fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms that are consistent with COVID-19 (even if symptoms are very mild), they likely have COVID-19. You should isolate your child (age dependent) at home and away from other people and pets. Contact your child's healthcare provider, tell them your child was exposed to someone with COVID-19 and are now sick and ask if your child can be tested for COVID-19.

Preventing the spread of COVID-19

You can help slow the spread of COVID-19 and protect yourself and others by taking the following steps:

- Wear a face covering anytime you go within 6 feet of anyone not in your immediate household. Also wear a face covering when you leave the home and enter public spaces, such as a store, taxi, or communal gathering space.
- Stay at least 6 feet from others.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol if soap and water aren't available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Stay home as much as possible and avoid gatherings.

Definitions

Here are some definitions of terms Public Health may use when investigating a COVID-19 case:

- **Close contact:** A close contact is someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for 15 minutes or longer.
- **Outbreak:** Two or more confirmed or probable cases with at least one case lab-confirmed, AND at least two cases have symptoms beginning within 14 days of each other, AND plausible epidemiological evidence of virus transmission in a shared location (e.g., workplace, congregate setting, event).
- **Isolation:** Isolation occurs when you have COVID-19 symptoms or have tested positive for COVID-19. Isolation means you stay home and away from others (including household members) for the recommended length of time to avoid spreading illness.
- **Quarantine:** Quarantine is when you stay home and away from others (outside your household) for the recommended length of time in case you are infected and are contagious. Quarantine becomes isolation if you later test positive for COVID-19 or develop COVID-19 symptoms.

References:

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/FallGuidanceK-12.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/Back-to-School-Planning-for-In-Person-Classes.pdf>

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