COVID-19
What families should know for safe return to in-person school 2021-22
Revised on 2/2/2022

Know how to screen for symptoms of COVID-19:
Screen your child for symptoms every day before going to school. Students must stay home if feeling unwell. Everyone must do their part to protect others and not come to school if they are exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms.

COVID-19 symptoms list:
The list applies to all individuals, regardless of vaccination status.

- Fever (100.0° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- New loss of taste or smell
- Muscle aches or body aches
- Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- Sore throat, when in combination with other symptoms
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea when in combination with other symptoms
- Headache when in combination with other symptoms
- Fatigue, when in combination with other symptoms
- Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) when in combination with other symptoms

Know test sites: Contact your child’s primary care physician for further instructions or visit www.ma.gov/stopthespread. Home tests, antigen tests and PCR tests are all acceptable testing methods for school. Please let your child’s school nurse know your child’s test date, type of test and results.

Symptomatic Testing: Individuals should not go to school if experiencing symptoms while at home. Please note, consistent with DPH, these protocols have been adjusted to recommend, but not require, a COVID-19 test to return to school. However, if individuals present with symptoms while at school, shallow nasal swab samples can be collected at school using BINAXNow rapid antigen test for students that have parent/guardian consent on file. If you have not already done so and would like to sign up for symptomatic testing at school, please use this link: https://www.cic-health.com/consent/ma

Vaccine Documentation: It is helpful for your child’s school nurse to have a copy of your child’s Covid Vaccine card. Submitting Covid Vaccine Status is voluntary.

Know what to do when you get your child’s COVID-19 results:
For a positive test result: Notify your school nurse as soon as possible. Remain at home for at least 5 days and until symptoms have improved and the child has had no fever for at least 24 hours. Contact your school nurse prior to returning to school. When counting out days: Day Zero is the date that symptoms started. If there are no symptoms, the date of the positive test is Day Zero.

For a negative test result: Return to school will depend on having improved symptoms and having no fever for at least 24 hours without any fever-reducing medications. Check with the school nurse before returning to school.

Close Contacts Outside of School:
Close contacts are defined as individuals who have been within 6 feet of a COVID-19 positive individual while indoors, for at least 15 minutes during a 24-hour period. Please note that the at-risk exposure time begins 48 hours prior to symptom onset (or time of positive test if asymptomatic) and continues until the time the COVID-19 positive individual is isolated. The last date of exposure to a positive Covid-19 individual is Day Zero. See Protocol B.

The following close contacts are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols:

- Asymptomatic, fully vaccinated close contacts: Individuals who are asymptomatic and fully vaccinated are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.
- Close contacts who have had COVID-19 within the past 90 days: An individual who has been previously diagnosed with COVID-19 and then becomes a close contact of someone with COVID-19 is exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols if:
  - The exposure occurred within 90 days of the onset of their own illness AND the exposed individual is recovered and remains without COVID-19 symptoms.
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Recommended testing and quarantine response protocols

This section outlines testing and quarantine response protocols for individuals – students and staff – who test positive for COVID-19, close contacts who are not exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols, and symptomatic individuals. Each scenario outlines the duration of any recommended quarantine or isolation, the conditions to be met in order for the individual to return to school, and any additional considerations.

Overview of Protocol Categories:
- Protocol A: For individuals who test positive for COVID-19
- Protocol B: Protocol for asymptomatic close contacts
- Protocol C: Protocol for symptomatic individuals

Protocol A for Individuals who test positive

Duration: Self-isolation for COVID-19 positive cases is a minimum of 5 days after symptom onset or after positive PCR or antigen test, if asymptomatic.

Return to school: After 5 days and once they have:
- Been without fever for 24 hours (and without taking fever-reducing medications).
- Experienced improvement in other symptoms.
- Following the 5-day isolation period, individuals must mask for 5 additional days when around others, other than when eating, drinking or outside.

Protocol B (New Version) for Districts and Schools that Selected the New Testing Option to Provide At-home Rapid Antigen Tests

Updated testing guidance from DESE and DPH recommend that districts select the new option within the statewide testing program to offer weekly rapid at-home antigen tests to students and staff and discontinue contact tracing and Test and Stay programs. As such, for districts selecting this new option, individuals will no longer be identified as close contacts by school health professionals.

However, individuals may still be identified as close contacts outside of school settings (e.g. as a close contact of someone who tests positive for COVID-19 in their household). In these cases:

- While in school settings (including for sports and extracurriculars), asymptomatic vaccinated individuals remain exempt from testing and quarantine protocols. If an asymptomatic, vaccinated individual is identified as a close contact outside of school, they may return to school. Individuals should closely monitor for symptoms and follow Protocol C if they experience symptoms listed above.
- Unvaccinated individuals who are identified as close contacts outside of school settings should stay home and follow Protocol B below prior to returning to school:

As a reminder, the At-Home Testing program is structured so that, every other week, the District will provide each child and staff member who opts into At-Home Testing – vaccinated or unvaccinated – with a box that contains two (2) at-home rapid antigen tests. Those participating in the program are encouraged to test every Wednesday. These tests may be used to test your child if they are symptomatic. This program is at no cost to children, families, or DPS staff.

Please click here for directions on test administration:
Self-Test At-Home Instructions
Self Test At-Home Instructional YouTube Video

If you haven’t opted-in, you can do so at any time by using the following form: Opt-In Form/At-Home Testing for Students and Staff. Please complete one form for each child.

If your student tests positive on an at-home antigen test, please inform their school of the positive result using this link: https://forms.gle/GKLNDijhcTg3q4UD7
Protocol B (New Version): Protocol for asymptomatic, unvaccinated individuals identified as close contacts outside of school settings

Duration: Quarantine is at least 5 days from the date of exposure
Return to School: After 5 days, returning on day 6, provided that they:
- Remain asymptomatic,
- Adhere to strict mask use, other than when eating, drinking, or outside, and conduct active monitoring for symptoms through day 10; and,
- Self-isolate if symptoms develop.

Note: If an individual has symptoms at the time they are designated as a close contact or within the 5 days following initial exposure, they should follow the protocol for symptomatic individuals (Protocol C). If an individual tests positive at any time, they follow the protocol for individuals who test positive for COVID-19 (Protocol A). For all those exposed, best practice would also include a viral test (antigen or PCR) for COVID-19 at day 5 after exposure. An antigen test may be self-administered and does not need to be proctored or performed by a healthcare professional.

Protocol C: Protocol for symptomatic individuals

Protocol C applies to vaccinated and non-vaccinated individuals who experience the COVID-19 symptoms listed above and who have not tested positive for COVID-19.

Protocol C for symptomatic individuals: Return to school post-symptoms with optional test

Please note that, consistent with DPH, these protocols have been adjusted to recommend, but not require, a COVID-19 test to return to school.

Duration: Dependent on symptom resolution
Return to School: Individuals may return to school after they:
- Have improvement in symptoms.
- Have been without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- It is also recommended that individuals receive a negative PCR or antigen test result for COVID-19. An antigen test may be self-administered and does not need to be proctored or performed by a healthcare professional. Note: So long as the individual is not a close contact, if a medical professional makes an alternative diagnosis for the COVID-19-like symptoms, the individual may use this recommendation (e.g., for influenza or strep pharyngitis) in lieu of a PCR test or antigen test.
- Please note: If an individual has mild symptoms, the individual may be considered for testing using BinaxNOW, if available.
  - If the result is positive, they should be sent home and follow Protocol A.
  - If the result is negative, they should remain in school.
  - If the minimal symptom(s) persist, the individual may be re-tested within the subsequent 3 days. If symptoms worsen, the individual should seek medical care and be evaluated for the need for PCR testing.