

Q&A For Parents

“Close Contacts” in Schools

Q. Will I be notified if my child is exposed to COVID-19 at school?

A. Yes. Your school will let you know if your child is a “close contact” of someone with COVID-19. A close contact is someone who has been within six feet of a person infected with COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes in a 24-hour period. The school will give you instructions on how to quarantine and tell you when your student may safely return to class.

Q. What is quarantine and isolation?

A. **Quarantine** is when a person **who might have been exposed to the virus** but has no symptoms and hasn't been vaccinated needs to stay home. This is because they could be infected and could spread the virus, even if they don't feel sick.

Your school will let you know if your child was exposed to someone with COVID-19. [There are a few different types of quarantine \(https://bit.ly/2VpfiVM\)](https://bit.ly/2VpfiVM). Your child's school will work with Contra Costa Health Services to determine which quarantine instructions to follow.

Isolation is when someone who **is infected with the virus, is contagious and needs to stay home**. This helps to prevent spread of the virus to other people.

If your child gets COVID-19, they will need to stay home from school and follow [isolation instructions \(https://bit.ly/covid19-patients\)](https://bit.ly/covid19-patients).

Q. What does it mean exactly that my child must quarantine?

A. Under a regular quarantine, your child must stay home from school and away from others as much as possible for 10 days in case they have been infected. Your child may also be to do a “modified quarantine” and can return to class under certain conditions (more info on modified quarantine below).

Q. Does my child need to quarantine if they are fully vaccinated?

A. No. Students who are fully vaccinated and symptom-free may continue going to school but should watch for symptoms for 14 days. Testing is still recommended 5-7 days after close contact with a person who has COVID-19.





Q. For how long does my unvaccinated child need to quarantine after a school exposure?



A. This depends on if your child has symptoms of COVID-19 and if both your child and the student with COVID-19 were wearing masks.

1. **Your child or the other student was not masked:** Your child can go back to school after Day 10 (from date of last exposure) if they stay symptom-free. Or your child can go back to school on Day 8 if a test on or after Day 5 (from last date of exposure) is negative and they stay symptom-free.
 2. **Your child and the other student were both masked:** Your child can do “modified quarantine,” which means they can keep going to school in-person, but no after-school activities or childcare. They must stay symptom-free, continue to mask, and get tested twice: right after learning of exposure and on or after Day 5 (if the first test is on or after Day 5 due to late exposure notification, one test is okay). Modified quarantine ends on Day 8 if a test taken on or after Day 5 is negative.
 3. **Your child develops symptoms or tests positive:** Stay home from school, after-school activities and childcare and get tested. Let your school and doctor know. Your child can go back to school on Day 11 or when feeling better and fever-free for 24 hours, without medication, whichever is longer.
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Q. Why can students who have been exposed to COVID-19 continue in-person schooling under “modified quarantine”?

A. Scientific research and experience from around the country demonstrate that when both students are wearing face masks appropriately at the time of a school-based exposure to COVID-19, in-school spread is unlikely, and students can safely continue in-person learning. During modified quarantine, students may go to class if they continue to mask appropriately, get tested regularly and don’t participate in extracurricular activities, including sports and childcare/aftercare.

Q. Does my child have to get tested during quarantine?

A. Testing is strongly recommended for people who are close contacts of someone with COVID-19. Testing shows if someone is infected even if they do not show symptoms or feel sick. Testing is required for students in modified quarantine: right after learning of exposure and on Day 5 or later. If the first test is on or after Day 5 due to late exposure notification, one test is okay.





Q. What kind of tests are accepted by schools?



A. If your child is symptom-free, any FDA-approved test (PCR or antigen) can be used, but PCR is preferred. At-home testing cannot be used to change quarantine status unless the at-home test is directly watched by authorized school or work personnel, either in-person or over live video.

Q. What if my child tests positive for COVID-19 or develops symptoms during quarantine?

A. If your child tests positive for COVID-19 or develops symptoms, they need to isolate at home for 10 days. Let your school and doctor know. Get your child tested if you haven't already done so. Your child can go back to school on Day 11 or when they are feeling better and fever-free for 24 hours, without medication, whichever is longer.

Q. Do I and other people in my household also need to quarantine if my child is a close contact to someone at school?

A. Your household does not need to quarantine unless your child tests positive or has COVID-19 symptoms.

Q. What if I or someone else in our household tests positive for COVID-19?

A. First, notify the school of the student's exposure at home right away. If the infected person cannot isolate (stay away) fully from other household members, everyone in the home must stay at home for at least the infected person's isolation period. The infected person's isolation period ends on Day 11 or when they are feeling better and fever-free for 24 hours without medication, whichever is longer.

If unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated, the exposed student in the home must quarantine for 10 days more but may end their quarantine early if they are symptom-free and test negative on Day 5 or later of their quarantine period. Since the exposure happened at home and not at school, modified quarantine is not an option.

See examples of counting quarantine and isolation at: <https://bit.ly/3zVB96p>.