

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions for Parents with Children at School

Helpful information from your local pediatricians for families and caregivers with children attending school in person.

Which children are considered high-risk for COVID-19?

Children are determined to be at greater risk of COVID-19 if they are considered to be medically fragile. Some examples include children with persistent or poorly controlled asthma, complex cardiac conditions, diabetes, physical or developmental limitations, certain severe neurological conditions, as well as those immunosuppressed due to their condition, diagnosis, or treatment. Parents with children in these categories should consult with their primary care or medical specialist about their decision to return to or remain in school.

What should I do if my child has a simple cold or stomach bug symptoms?

In the midst of a pandemic, it is not safe to assume that it is a simple cold or stomach bug and not a COVID-19 infection. If your child develops any new symptoms including fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, vomiting, or diarrhea, they may benefit from testing to determine if they are infected with COVID-19. Even if the symptom is minor, parents should keep their child home from school and contact their child's primary care provider for an assessment. Your provider will arrange for testing if needed.

What should I do if there is a confirmed COVID-19 case at my child's school?

If there is a positive case at your school, your school will likely inform all parents that a case has been identified. If your child has been exposed to that individual, you will receive a phone call from the school or the Maine CDC to inform you that your child has been exposed and needs to quarantine. If you do not receive a call, you are safe to assume that your child is not at risk of exposure and quarantine is not necessary for your child. Your child should be able to continue to attend school as scheduled.

When does my child need to quarantine and for how long?

If your child has been instructed to quarantine due to exposure of someone who has a COVID-19 infection, he or she will need to remain home and away from others in self-isolation for 14 days from the last day of exposure. This is because it can take up to 14 days for symptoms to develop once a person has been exposed. If your child develops symptoms during the 14-day quarantine, you should contact your primary care provider to arrange a COVID-19 test. Even if your child is tested and receives a negative test during this time, he or she must remain quarantined for the duration of the 14 days and will not be able to return to school.

When does my child need a COVID-19 test, and what does that process look like?

Children with new infectious symptoms of COVID-19 including fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell should be tested for COVID-19. The best way to arrange testing is by contacting your child's primary care provider who can assist with scheduling a test. Even on the weekends, providers have colleagues on-call who can assist with assessments, managing symptoms, scheduling a test, and coordinating test results. At present, costs of the test will be covered by most medical insurance plans and free testing is also available through the Maine CDC. Also, a more comfortable test may be available for children.

How can I make sure my child is as healthy as possible during this school year?

In order to ensure that your child remains as healthy as possible during COVID-19, you should continue to do the things you've always done, including eating a healthy diet, getting needed exercise, and maintaining good sleep habits to boost immunity. Also, it is important to keep up-to-date with immunizations including flu shots to avoid the potential of contracting both illnesses at the same time. Lastly, as it is for all of us during COVID-19, it is important for your child to learn good handwashing habits, wear a mask in public, avoid crowds, and keep distance from others.



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