



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

PO BOX 360
TRENTON, N.J. 08625-0360

www.nj.gov/health

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

SHEILA Y. OLIVER
Lt. Governor

JUDITH M. PERSICHILLI, RN, BSN, MA
Commissioner

**Public Health Recommendations for K12 Schools
Frequently Asked Questions**

Can schools use home test results when implementing a test to stay modified quarantine? If yes, do nurses/staff have to administer the tests or can schools accept a parent attestation for these results?

Home tests may be used for test to stay. Schools should have a policy to verify/accept attestations for parent-administered tests. Self-tests are not CLIA-waived tests and are authorized for self-collection, self-testing, and self-reading of test results, therefore school nurses cannot administer the tests but can observe while the individual performs their test.

Do NJDOH's current masking guidelines align with CDC's recommendations? If not, why?

The DOH recommendations acknowledge CDC's recommendations on universal masking. The DOH recommendations do not preclude a school from instituting universal masking or more stringent policies than the DOH recommendations. Schools should develop their policies in consultation with their local health department and school medical personnel, as applicable.

Some of our teachers are struggling physically, mentally, and emotionally. What resources are available to support teachers and first responders?

The pandemic has impacted many individuals across the nation, in particular youth, and frontline workers. The NJ Department of Human Services, through NJ Mental Health Cares, offers help to people dealing with anxiety and worry related to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. New Jerseyans can call 1-866-202-HELP (4357) for free, confidential support.

Can schools shift away from contact tracing and simply exclude students in the way schools do for all other communicable diseases?

NJDOH recommends continuing contact tracing to the best of the school's ability to do so, in order to minimize risk of spread.

Are masks required to be worn on school busses?

On February 25, 2022, CDC announced that the requirement for wearing of masks on buses or vans operated by public or private school systems, including early care and education/child care programs has been lifted. NJDOH will issue revised guidance for K-12 and childcare settings to follow CDC's lead for masking on buses and will consider situations where masking would continue to be recommended (e.g., high-levels of COVID-19 activity, isolation/quarantine scenarios).

Meanwhile, NJDOH recommends that schools make decisions about masking on busses based on risks and benefits. As NJDOH K–12 recommendations for masking in schools also applies to school buses, school districts should continue to follow the NJDOH COVID-19 Activity Level Index (CALI) and consult their local health department when making these decisions.

If staff or students are eligible for but have not been boosted, must they quarantine when exposed?

Yes, exposed students and staff who are eligible but have not yet been boosted, should be excluded from school and follow the recommendations for quarantine.

If student A is masked and exposed to student B who has tested positive for COVID-19 and is unmasked, does student A have to quarantine?

Yes, if student A is not up to date with COVID vaccination and was identified as a close contact to Student B, and both students were not wearing a mask at the time of exposure, student A should quarantine.

Please note that CDC and NJDOH provide an exception to students identified as close contacts: In the K–12 indoor classroom setting or a structured outdoor setting where mask use can be observed the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student if both the infected student and the exposed student(s) correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time.

There will be times that immunocompromised will need to take off masks, such as when they eat. Should schools then make sure distancing is in place (6 feet)? How can these students be better protecting during lunch, etc.

The NJDOH guidance recognizes the limitations of distancing in school, but physical distancing remains one of the mitigating measures schools should consider when developing their layered policies and protocols.

If students are not wearing masks in the classroom, how should schools define who are close contacts?

In the absence of masking in the classroom, a close contact is someone within 6 feet of a person with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (same as in any other community setting). If both students are masked in a structured classroom setting and are within 3–6 feet of each other, they would not be considered close contacts.

Are school still required to test unvaccinated staff weekly?

Yes. EO 253 is still in effect, which requires testing of unvaccinated covered workers at a minimum once to twice weekly.

Can schools use over the counter COVID tests (aka home tests) to satisfy testing requirements under EO 253?

Yes. Self-tests (e.g., home-based tests) are acceptable with the requirement that the covered worker makes the testing results (positive or negative) available to the covered setting. To satisfy the testing requirement, a covered worker must undergo screening testing at minimum one to two times each

week using either antigen or molecular tests that have EUA by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (“FDA”) or are operating per the Laboratory Developed Test requirements by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Does an "up-to-date" status apply to the weekly testing requirement for school employees? For example, if you do not have your booster, but have received your primary series of vaccinations, are you required to be tested weekly?

EO 253 requires that covered workers be fully vaccinated or be subject to testing once to twice weekly at a minimum. The definition in the EO of fully vaccinated remains to be "two weeks or more after an individual has received the second dose in a two-dose series or two weeks or more after they have received a single-dose vaccine." While all individuals who are eligible for a booster are recommended to receive one, they are not required to be subject to testing weekly if they are not boosted.

If I have a student who is symptomatic with no known exposure, would a negative home test be acceptable for a return to school?

This is addressed in home testing guidance more specifically:

https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/COVID_home_tests.pdf

In general, NJDOH recommends two negative self-tests at least 24 hours apart for symptomatic individuals *or* a confirmatory test administered by a healthcare provider.

What are the travel-related recommendations for K12 schools?

While there is no statewide travel advisory or mandate in place at this time, schools are encouraged to have a policy for exclusion for students and staff that travel that is consistent with [CDC COVID-19 travel recommendations](#); for example, CDC recommends quarantine for 5 days following travel for anyone not up to date on vaccination. For those traveling to/from New Jersey, domestic travel is defined as lasting 24 hours or longer to states or US territories other than those connected to New Jersey, such as Pennsylvania, New York, and Delaware.

Are desktop barriers effective? Should they be used during lunch?

The efficacy of clear plastic barriers for preventing the spread of COVID-19 is unknown. NJDOH does not currently recommend using such barriers in to prevent transmission in K–12 schools.

Are students with a 504-plan due to a medical condition/being immunocompromised permitted to learn remotely from home as was stated in the Road Forward?

If a student’s IEP or 504 plan provides for home instruction or virtual instruction, it would be permitted in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.8 for a student with an IEP and in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:16-10.1 for a student with a 504 plan.

Please provide guidance on remote learning and virtual therapy (OT, PT, Speech, counseling) during student quarantine/isolation.

In the event that an LEA institutes a school- or district-wide program of virtual or remote instruction pursuant to NJSA 18A:7F-9, related services may be delivered to students with disabilities through the use of electronic communication or a virtual or online platform as required by the student's IEP.

Additionally, LEA's are permitted to provide virtual related services in accordance with the Temporary Rule Modification to N.J.A.C. 6A:14, and extended pursuant to Executive Order 292.

Is NJDOH planning to follow the expected CDC change in using hospitalization rates/cases as the primary indicator for masking recommendations as opposed to the current CALI score based recommendations?

The NJDOH CALI score and the new CDC community level metrics both use a combination of transmission and severity indicators, although there are differences in the measures and thresholds. NJDOH will be reviewing the new CDC community activity levels, but for now continues to recommend that schools use the regional CALI score when making decisions on masking and other preventive measures.

Are school nurses still required to wear masks in their offices now that the statewide mask mandate for schools has been lifted?

On-site healthcare services staff, including school nurses, should follow appropriate CDC and OSHA guidance for healthcare and emergency response personnel. School nurses should use [Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions](#) based on the care and tasks required.

It does not appear that the most recent NJDOH guidance requests twice weekly testing for students in extracurricular activities — is that accurate?

Twice weekly testing for students not up to date on vaccination who are participating in extracurricular activities is recommended during periods of very high community transmission only. There has been no recent change to this guidance:

https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/K-12_screening_testing_guidelines.pdf

When will the requirement to offer virtual learning become a district decision? If children are home sick, they should be resting and not logging on to the computer. We do not offer virtual learning for those sick with any other illness. If they are out for a specific number of days, home instruction is offered.

Where an individual student, group of students, or entire class(es) are excluded from school due to meeting the NJDOH's COVID-19 exclusion criteria, LEAs are strongly encouraged to immediately provide virtual or remote instruction to those students in a manner commensurate with in-person instruction. Please see the [NJDOE's August 11, 2021 broadcast](#) for additional information.

What is the recommendation on daily temperature checks?

NJDOH does not currently recommend that schools institute daily temperature checks. As described in the K-12 guidance, parents/caregivers should be strongly encouraged to monitor their children for signs of illness every day as they are the front line for assessing illness in their children

Does masking of positive students returning to school on days 6-10 identify them as having had COVID-19 and hinder their medical privacy?

Masking is indicated in several circumstances, not only when students return to school on days 6-10 of isolation. There may be students returning from quarantine or students who choose to wear a mask based on their personal or household risk levels. Returning to school on day 6-10 after isolation/quarantine while consistently masking is the option that maximizes in-person learning; the alternative is that students with COVID-19 can isolate or quarantine at home for the full 10 days. Close contacts should wear a mask for 10 days following an exposure regardless of vaccination status.

If a student's family member has symptoms, and the rapid test is negative, does that student still need to stay out for 5 days? What if the student has their primary series but is not up-to-date with vaccination (has not received the booster) and it is more than 90 days since their vaccination?

A student need only be excluded from school if they are a close contact of a COVID-19 case. In this particular situation, a close contact of a symptomatic individual who tested negative (and therefore is not a COVID-19 case) does not need to be excluded.

What does “up to date with vaccinations” mean?

A person is up to date with their COVID-19 vaccination if they have received all recommended doses in the primary series and [one booster](#) when eligible. Getting a second booster is not necessary to be considered up to date at this time.

Should school nurses verify the booster status of students who are 12 years and older and exclude them from the school if they are named as close contacts?

Yes, students 12 years and older who completed a primary series of COVID-19 vaccine but have *not* received a recommended booster shot when eligible meet the criteria for quarantine and should be excluded if they had close contact with someone with COVID-19.

How should students/staff who are close contacts of a person diagnosed with COVID in their household be instructed to quarantine?

Household contacts who can't isolate away from a household member with COVID-19 should start their quarantine period on the day after the household member would have completed their 10-day isolation period, UNLESS the household member is able to consistently wear a well-fitted mask in the household through day 10, in which case the quarantine period would start on the day after the household member completes their 5-day isolation period.

Why is previous infection and presence of antibodies not recognized as an acceptable form of proof of vaccination?

While there is significant scientific evidence to support the effectiveness and duration of vaccine-induced immunity, the body of evidence for infection-induced immunity is more limited at the current time. Data are presently insufficient to determine an antibody titer threshold that indicates if an individual is protected from infection. At this time, there is no FDA-authorized or approved test that providers or the public can use to reliably determine whether a person is protected from infection. Therefore, although individuals who have had COVID-19 in the past 90 days do not need to quarantine, NJDOH follows CDC guidance and does not consider COVID-19 infection to be equivalent to vaccination for the determination of infection risk. More information is available at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/vaccine-induced-immunity.html>

For contacts that choose to get tested on day 5–7 and return on day 8, do they need to mask until day 10?

Yes, unless they are **unable** to mask. All individuals who return from quarantine should wear a mask from days 6-10. If and only if an individual is **unable** to wear a mask, they **may** return on day 8 without a mask after testing negative on days 5, 6 or 7.