

# School and COVID - What to Expect

While preventive efforts like face coverings, handwashing, screening for symptoms, distancing, and good ventilation can greatly reduce the likelihood of spreading COVID, the risk cannot be entirely eliminated in settings like schools where people are together in person.

It can be scary for students, parents or staff to hear that there may have been a case at school. Here are a few things to know about how schools and public health are working together to help keep students, staff and families healthy.

## If there is a confirmed case at school ...

- Snohomish Health District has a team dedicated to responding to COVID in schools or child care. Disease investigators contact the person who has tested positive and the team works with the school or child care provider.
- Close contacts of the case are identified and provided via a secure portal to the Health District. Trained contact tracers reach out to everyone who has been identified.
  - Close contact = 15 minutes within six feet of someone infectious.
  - Close contacts are notified directly via phone call by public health staff.
- If you are not contacted by public health, and if no one in your household has been ill or identified as a close contact, your child does not need to quarantine or isolate.

## If a child is sick but has not tested positive...

- Anyone with symptoms, even mild ones, should stay home. Symptoms could include cough, sore throat, fever, chills, fatigue, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, or loss of taste or smell. One symptom is enough to stay home.
- A student with symptoms at school is to be sent home. Until they can be picked up, they'll be distanced from others.
- Public health recommends anyone with symptoms get tested.

## If a child is a close contact of a confirmed case...

- A public health order requires close contacts to quarantine. The quarantine period is 14 days from most recent contact. No one who is a close contact should be at school or child care during that time.
- Others in the household of a close contact should quarantine, as well, and monitor for symptoms.
- If school officials are informed a close contact has come to school during the quarantine period, they may ask them to return home, or to isolate in a designated room until a parent or guardian can pick them up.

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## Timelines for return to school after illness or exposure\*

### Negative test results and not a close contact

Return to school once symptoms have improved and no fever for at least 24 hours.

### Close contact of a confirmed case

Stay home for the full 14-day quarantine period, regardless of symptoms or test results.

### Symptoms but not tested

Remain home for at least 10 days after symptoms started AND at least 24 hours after fever is gone and symptoms improve.

*\*These timelines apply to students and staff. At this time, a doctor's note is not adequate for a student or staff member to return to school.*

## A note on privacy

- Do not expect your school or the Health District to provide the name of a student or staff member who has tested positive for COVID-19. This is protected personal health information under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA).
- Public health and schools also are not providing detailed information that could identify individuals.
- Contact tracers are required to adhere to privacy requirements. They will do their best to answer questions, but won't divulge others' personal health information.
- If you know the identity of someone who has COVID through personal channels, do not share that information publicly. Identifying ill students or staff on a public platform does not add to disease control efforts, and is likely to raise problems rather than solve them.

## Stay up-to-date on COVID-19: [www.snohd.org/covid](http://www.snohd.org/covid)

*Exact timelines and guidance may change over time. This document was created October 12, 2020.*