



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
COMMUNICABLE DISEASE SERVICE
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PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

SHEILA Y. OLIVER
Lt. Governor

JUDITH M. PERSICILLI, RN, BSN, MA
Commissioner

January 8, 2021

Re: Clarifications for the testing of ill children suspected of having COVID-19 prior to return to school

Colleagues:

On January 5, NJDOH sent out a message to clinicians to inform them of K-12 school guidance changes addressing testing for the return of sick students to school. In that message, NJDOH stated that any child with **COVID-19 compatible symptoms** should not return to school until they have either received a negative viral test (molecular or antigen) for SARS-CoV-2 or they have completed an isolation period of at least 10 days since symptom onset and at least 24 hours after resolution of fever without fever-reducing medications with symptom improvement. A purely clinical alternative diagnosis would no longer be accepted.

To further clarify, students with **COVID-19 compatible symptoms** are defined in NJDOH K-12 school guidance using CSTE/CDC case criteria definition as those who have:

- At least **two** of the following symptoms: fever (measured or subjective), chills, rigors (shivers), myalgia (muscle aches), headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, congestion or runny nose;
- **OR**
- At least **one** of the following symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new olfactory disorder, new taste disorder.

COVID-19 testing is not required for students who do not meet either of the above criteria to return to school. Additionally, for students with chronic illness, only new symptoms, or symptoms worse than baseline should be used to fulfil these criteria.

This message was crafted to provide clinicians with situational awareness of changes to K-12 school guidance realizing that they may not be applicable to every clinical scenario. We encourage health partners with concerns about individual cases to continue to reach out to their local health department or NJDOH for consultation.

Additional Resources:

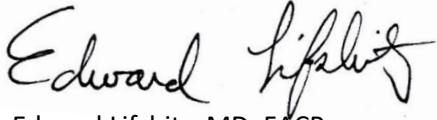
NJ Local Health Department Directory:

<https://www.nj.gov/health/lh/documents/LocalHealthDirectory.pdf>

NJDOH K-12 School Guidance:

https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/RecommendationsForLocalHealthDepts_K12Schools.pdf

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward Lifshitz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Edward" and last name "Lifshitz" clearly legible.

Edward Lifshitz, MD, FACP

Medical Director

Infectious and Zoonotic Disease Program

Communicable Disease Service

New Jersey Department of Health