

Nippersink SD 2



Frequently Asked Questions



Vaccination

1. What is the importance of vaccinations in supporting full in-person instruction?

Achieving high levels of COVID-19 vaccination among eligible students, as well as teachers, staff, and household members, is critical to help schools safely resume full operations.

Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. People who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are at low risk of symptomatic or severe infection. A [growing body of evidence](#) suggests that people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are less likely to have an asymptomatic infection or transmit COVID-19 to others than people who are not fully vaccinated. In most settings, people who are [fully vaccinated](#) can safely resume activities they did before the pandemic, except where prevention measures are required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance.

[People 12 years and older are now eligible for COVID-19 vaccination.](#) Schools can promote vaccinations among teachers, staff, families, and eligible students by providing information about COVID-19 vaccination, encouraging vaccine trust and confidence, and establishing supportive policies and practices that make getting vaccinated as easy and convenient as possible.

2. Is there a state mandate that students or staff must obtain the COVID-19 vaccine?

Currently, there is no state mandate to obtain the COVID-19 vaccine. However, the CDC and IDPH strongly encourage all individuals eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine to be vaccinated. Vaccination benefits not only the individual, but also schools and communities by reducing transmission. For example, fully vaccinated persons are not required to quarantine if exposed to a case as long as they remain asymptomatic and do not need to maintain physical distance. Fully vaccinated people who have a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should be tested three to five days after exposure and should wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result.

3. How can a school determine if a student is vaccinated?

Nippersink District 2 Nurses have access to [Illinois Comprehensive Automated Immunization Registry Exchange \(I-CARE\)](#) Data Systems.

Masking

4. Who must wear masks in schools?

Everyone. [Executive Order 2021-18](#) requires that all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to P-12 schools wear a mask while indoors, regardless of vaccination status.

The following categories of people are exempted from the requirement to wear a mask:

- Children under 2 years of age.
- A person who [cannot wear a mask or cannot safely wear a mask](#) because of a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.). Discuss the possibility of [reasonable accommodation](#) with staff or students who are not fully vaccinated who are unable to wear a mask, or who have difficulty wearing certain types of masks because of a disability.
- A person for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or federal regulations.

The State and [CDC Order](#) continue to require passengers and drivers to wear masks on school buses.

Appropriate mask use (i.e., covering over face AND nose, correct fit across the face and the correct material used for masking) is essential to prevent transmission. Please see the CDC [Guide to Masks](#).

5. Are masks required during extracurricular activities?

Yes, when indoors. All teachers, staff, students, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, must wear a mask while indoors at school, including during sports and other extracurricular activities. All individuals, regardless of vaccination status, may remove masks during sports and other extracurricular activities conducted outdoors. [CDC](#) recommends that people who are not fully vaccinated wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated, especially in communities with [substantial to high transmission](#).

Those who are fully vaccinated may also wear masks outdoors when in crowded environments, should they wish to do so.

See the [IDPH sports guidelines](#) for more information.

Physical Distancing

6. What are the CDC's physical distancing recommendations for individuals in classrooms?

CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms to reduce transmission risk. Because of the importance of in-person learning, schools where not everyone is fully vaccinated should implement physical distancing to the extent possible within their structures (in addition to other prevention strategies), but should not exclude students from in-person learning to keep a minimum distance requirement.

Testing

7. How can testing be used to support in-person instruction?

Testing can be used to keep students in school when identified as classroom close contact through the Test to Stay protocol. This allows asymptomatic students to avoid quarantine by testing on days one, three, five and seven after exposure as long as they continue to test negative. For complete details on the Test to Stay protocol, see Question 8 below. NSD2 Nurses can assist with testing locations and options.

Contract Tracing and Quarantine

8. How are close contacts determined in school?

Contact tracing is used by health departments to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. In general, contact tracing involves identifying people who have a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 (cases) and people who they came in contact with (close contacts) and working with them to interrupt disease spread. This includes asking people with COVID-19 to [isolate](#) and their contacts to [quarantine](#) at home voluntarily. Fully vaccinated persons who remain asymptomatic and those with documented

COVID-19 infection within the past 90 days are excluded from quarantine. However, the new CDC guidance recommends that fully vaccinated persons test three to five days after the known exposure and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days after exposure or until a negative test result.

In Illinois, contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine is required per Part 690 Control of Communicable Disease Code, Subpart I. Further, the Communicable Disease Code also requires mandatory reporting of any suspect, confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 to the local health department immediately (within 3 hours).

For all individuals where exposure occurred outside of the classroom setting and for teachers, staff and adults in the indoor P-12 classroom setting, CDC defines a [close contact](#) as an individual not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. For students in the indoor classroom setting, contacts who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student do not require quarantine as long as both the case and the contact were consistently masked. If they were not consistently masked, then close contacts are classroom students who were within 6 feet of the infected student for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.

In general, individuals who are solely exposed to a confirmed case while outdoors should not be considered close contacts.

The longer a person is exposed to an infected person, the higher the risk of exposure/transmission. The infectious period of close contact begins two calendar days before the onset of symptoms (for a symptomatic person) or two calendar days before the positive sample was obtained (for an asymptomatic person). If the case was symptomatic (e.g., coughing, sneezing), persons with briefer periods of exposure may also be considered contacts, as determined by local health departments. Persons who have had lab-confirmed COVID-19 within the past 90 days or those fully vaccinated who remain asymptomatic, according to CDC guidelines, are not required to quarantine if identified as a close contact to a confirmed case.

Local health departments are the final authority on identifying close contacts.

9. What options are available for unvaccinated students to return to school from quarantine after an exposure?

The local health department will make the final determination on who is to be quarantined and for how long. They also may determine that a close contact is not a candidate for modified quarantine due to a high-risk exposure (e.g., sustained close contact without masking).

- • Option 1:1 Quarantine at home for 14 calendar days. Date of last exposure is considered day 0.
- Option 2:2 Quarantine for 10 calendar days after the close contact's last exposure to the COVID-19 case. Date of last exposure is considered day 0.
 - The individual may end quarantine after day 10 if no symptoms of COVID-19 developed during daily monitoring.
 - SARS-CoV-2 PCR testing is recommended and may be required by the local health department.
 - The individual can maintain physical distancing and masking at all times when returning to school; for classrooms where masking is strictly adhered to as required, physical distance of 3 to 6 feet is acceptable for return.
- Option 3:3 Quarantine period is for seven calendar days after the last exposure if:
 - No symptoms developed during daily monitoring AND the individual has a negative SARS-CoV-2 diagnostic test (PCR) that was collected within 48 hours of exposure day 7 (starting on day 6 or after).
 - The individual is responsible for obtaining a copy of the negative results for documentation purposes.
 - The individual can maintain physical distancing and masking at all times when returning to school; for classrooms where masking is strictly adhered to as required, physical distance of 3 to 6 feet is acceptable for return.
- Option 4: Test to Stay Strategy, as has been documented by CDC,⁴ if schools test close contacts, as defined above, on days one, three, five, and seven from date of exposure by a PCR or rapid antigen or molecular emergency use authorization (EUA)-approved test, close contacts are permitted to remain in the classroom as long as the results are negative.
 - Test to Stay is only applicable when both the COVID-19-confirmed case and close contact were engaged in consistent and correct use of well-fitting masks, regardless of vaccination status (universal masking), as required by [Executive Order 2021-18](#).

- Test to Stay may be used for any indoor exposure, with the exception of household exposures, for both students and staff who are not fully vaccinated.
- Students or staff who are not fully vaccinated and engaged in Test to Stay after an exposure may participate in extracurricular activities. Local health departments have the authority to order a classroom-only Test-to-Stay protocol after assessing the risk of an individual situation.
- However, if the close contact is identified five days or more from the date of exposure, adjust testing accordingly, ideally on days five and seven after the last exposure.
- When testing in the outlined cadence is not possible due to weekends and holidays, students and staff who are not fully vaccinated should be tested at the earliest possible opportunity.
- At the conclusion of the Test to Stay modified quarantine period, the school should notify the local health department that the individual has successfully completed testing and remained negative.
- Local health departments have the authority to assess high-risk exposures and order a traditional quarantine without the option for Test to Stay.
- If at any time the student tests positive or becomes symptomatic, they should be immediately isolated and sent home, and the local health department notified.

Regardless of when an individual ends quarantine, daily symptom monitoring should continue through calendar day 14 after the exposure. Individuals should continue to adhere to recommended mitigation strategies, including proper and consistent mask use, physical distancing, hand hygiene, cough hygiene, environmental cleaning and disinfection, avoiding crowds and sick people, and ensuring adequate indoor ventilation. If any symptoms develop during or after ending quarantine, the individual should immediately self-isolate and contact their local health department or healthcare provider to report their symptoms. The health department can provide guidance on how to safely quarantine and isolate within the household.

Determining Prevention Strategies

10. How will NSD2 apply the CDC’s recommended layered prevention strategies?

In alignment with CDC guidance, the State of Illinois has issued an updated Executive Order 2021-18 that requires that masks be worn indoors by all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to P-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. The State of Illinois also requires all public and nonpublic schools to comply with contact tracing, in combination with isolation and quarantine, as directed by state and local public health departments.

In addition to consistent and correct universal indoor mask use and contact tracing, isolation, and quarantine requirements, the following COVID-19 prevention strategies remain critical to protect students, teachers, and staff who are not fully vaccinated, especially in areas of moderate to high community transmission levels.

- Promoting vaccination
- Physical distancing
- Screening testing to promptly identify cases, clusters, and outbreaks
- Ventilation
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
- Staying home when sick and

11. How can schools determine what level of transmission is occurring in their community?

Schools can review data from the [CDC](#) or [IDPH](#) to find recent information on the number of new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the previous week. CDC defines community transmission as low, moderate, substantial, or high as follows:

	Low Transmission (blue)	Moderate Transmission (yellow)	Substantial Transmission (orange)	High Transmission (red)
Total new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days	0-9.99	10-49.99	50-99.99	≥ 100

12. What are the CDC's requirements and recommendations for school buses and other school-related transportation?

The [CDC](#) issued an Order, effective as of February 2, 2021, that requires all individuals to wear a mask on public transportation to prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. The CDC's Order applies to all public transportation conveyances, including school buses. In addition to consistent and correct universal indoor mask use in all P-12 schools, as required by State of Illinois Executive Order 2021-18 passengers and drivers **must** wear a mask on school buses, including on buses operated by public and nonpublic school systems, subject to the exclusions and exemptions in CDC's order.

There is no COVID-19-related capacity limit for passengers on school buses. During transportation, open or crack windows in buses and other forms of transportation, if doing so does not pose a safety risk. Keeping windows open a few inches improves air circulation.