



COVID-19 FAQ: CONTACTS, TRACING, QUARANTINE AND ISOLATION

CONTACTS/CONTACT TRACING

Q: Who is a “close contact”?

- A person who was within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more
- A person who provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19
- A person who had direct physical contact with a person (hugged or kissed them) who has COVID-19
- A person who shared eating or drinking utensils with a person who has COVID-19
- A person who has been sneezed on, coughed on or otherwise exposed to the respiratory droplets of a person with COVID-19

[\(CDC guidance\)](#)

Q: What is contact tracing?

Contact tracing is the process public health officials use to identify people who may have had close contact with an infectious person. School districts may be asked to assist health officials in identifying those who may be close contacts.

[\(CDC contact tracing guidance\)](#)

ISOLATION

Q: What is the purpose of isolation?

Isolation keeps someone who is sick or tested positive for COVID-19 without symptoms away from others, even in their own home. [\(CDC isolation guidance\)](#)

Q: How long is an isolation period?

Health officials determine the length of an isolation period. Generally, a COVID-19 isolation period is a minimum of 10 days from the date symptoms started or, for those with no symptoms, from the date of a positive test. Those with symptoms may need to isolate for longer than 10 days. Symptomatic individuals should remain in isolation until after 10 days since symptoms first appeared have passed, **and** at least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medical, **and** if other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving. ([CDC isolation guidance](#))

Q: What should parents/guardians do if their student is asked to isolate by health officials?

Those in isolation should stay home (unless in need of medical care) and separate themselves from others by staying in a specific “sick room” or area and using a separate bathroom (if available). ([CDC isolation guidance](#))

Q: If a student is in isolation, may the student’s siblings continue to attend school?

Probably not. If the sibling is a “close contact” of the sibling who tested positive or is ill, then health department officials likely will order a quarantine for members of the household. If the siblings have not been in close contact, health officials will determine if a quarantine is necessary. ([CDC isolation guidance](#))

QUARANTINE

Q: What is the purpose of quarantine?

Quarantine is used to keep someone *who might have been exposed to COVID-19* away from others. Quarantine helps prevent spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are sick or if they are infected with the virus without feeling symptoms. ([CDC quarantine guidance](#))

Q: How long is a quarantine period?

Health officials determine the length of a quarantine period. Generally, the quarantine period begins on the date of last close contact with a person who has COVID-19. The quarantine ends 14 days after the date of last close contact. A few caveats:

- If during a quarantine the person is in close contact with another person who gets sick with COVID-19, they will need to restart quarantine.

- If the person in quarantine lives in a household where close contact with a person who has COVID-19 is unavoidable, the quarantine period begins on the date the person with COVID-19 ends home isolation and ends after 14 more days have passed.

(CDC quarantine guidance)

Q: Does a school district decide who must quarantine or isolate or for how long?

No. State law empowers the state Health Department with the exclusive authority to issue an isolation or quarantine order. Health officials will determine the length of an isolation or quarantine period. School districts are obligated by law to respect and cooperate with the orders of health officials. (Health Department Legal Citation)

Q: What should parents/guardians do if their student is asked to quarantine by health officials?

Students asked to quarantine should stay home, separate themselves from others, monitor their health, and follow any other directions from their state or local health department. (CDC quarantine guidance)

Q: If a student is in quarantine, may the student's siblings continue to attend school?

Yes. Current health recommendations do not require a "contact of a close contact" to quarantine. If the student in quarantine tests positive and the sibling meets the definition of a close contact, then health officials may require the sibling and/or other family members to quarantine. (CDC quarantine guidance)

Q: Can a student or staff member in quarantine return to school if they test negative for COVID-19 before the quarantine period is complete?

No. Students and/or staff must stay home for 14 days after their last contact with a person who has COVID-19 and continue to monitor their health. Even if a student tests negative, symptoms can appear for up to 14 days after exposure to the virus. (CDC quarantine guidance)

Q: Can a student or staff member in quarantine return to school before the quarantine period is complete if they have no symptoms?

No. Students and/or staff must stay home for 14 days after their last contact with a person who has COVID-19 and continue to monitor their health. Symptoms can appear for up to 14 days after exposure to the virus. Some students could contract the virus even if they have no symptoms so ending the quarantine early could expose others to the virus. ([CDC quarantine guidance](#))

TESTING

Q: If a student or staff member is waiting on COVID-19 test results, should they attend school?

No. Health officials recommend the person being tested and their household contacts should quarantine at home and away from others and monitor their health. ([CDC waiting for test results guidance](#))