



**HANDLING POSSIBLE,  
SUSPECTED, PRESUMPTIVE,  
OR CONFIRMED CASES OF  
COVID-19**

**2021-2022**

## HARNETT COUNTY SCHOOLS COVID-19 GUIDANCE (UPDATED)

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### **TESTING**

Staff and students who have symptoms, regardless of vaccination status, should get tested for COVID-19 and isolate from others while waiting for the results. If testing is not possible, you should presume you are positive and follow the guidance below.

### **ISOLATION REQUIREMENTS**

Staff and students who test positive for COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status, and:

- **DO NOT HAVE SYMPTOMS** - Should isolate from others for 5 (five) days
- **DO HAVE SYMPTOMS** - Should isolate from others until fever free and symptoms are improving. Isolation should be for at least 5 (five) days since any symptoms began.

**Anyone who tests positive for COVID-19, or is considered a presumed positive, should continue wearing a mask for 5 (five) days after the 5 (five) day isolation period to minimize the risk of infecting others.**

### **QUARANTINE REQUIREMENTS**

Staff and students exposed to someone with COVID-19, and are:

- **NOT VACCINATED** - Should stay away from others for 5 (five) days, get tested on or after day 5 (five) of the exposure and if you test negative, you may return to school or work. It is recommended that you wear a mask for an additional 5 (five) days.
- **VACCINATED AND ELIGIBLE FOR A BOOSTER, BUT NOT YET BOOSTED** - Stay away from others for 5 (five) days, get tested on or after day 5 (five) of exposure and if you test negative, you may return to school or work. It is recommended that you wear a mask for an additional 5 (five) days.
- **VACCINATED AND HAVE EITHER RECEIVED A BOOSTER OR ARE NOT YET ELIGIBLE FOR A BOOSTER** - You do not need to isolate from others. It is recommended that you wear a mask for 10 (ten) days from exposure.

### **UNCHANGED GUIDANCE FROM STRONGSCHOOLS NC TOOLKIT**

Individuals who are not fully vaccinated after a close contact in a classroom or other school setting if masks are being worn appropriately and consistently by both the person with COVID-19 and the potentially exposed person DO NOT need to quarantine. Additional information regarding isolation and quarantine requirements can be found on pages 14-17 of the [StrongSchools NC Toolkit](#).



# Handling Possible, Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19

**Symptoms:** Students, teachers, and staff who have symptoms of [COVID-19](#), should stay home and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care. Staying home when sick is essential to keep infections out of schools and prevent spread to others.

For students, staff, and teachers with chronic conditions, symptom presence should represent a change from their typical health status to warrant exclusion from school. Occurrence of any of the symptoms below while a student, teacher, or staff member is at school suggests the person may be referred for diagnostic COVID-19 testing or evaluation.

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

More information on [how to monitor for symptoms](#) is available from the CDC.

## All schools should:

- Have staff perform self-monitoring of symptoms.
- Have families conduct home-based symptom screening for students, following typical school policies to keep children at home when ill. Recommend that families refer children to diagnostic testing who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19.
  - NCDHHS does not recommend daily COVID-19 symptom screening for all students at school entry. Schools should follow their typical procedures for exclusion as they would for any type of illness if a child is symptomatic at school.
- Immediately isolate symptomatic individuals to a designated area at the school.
  - Maintain a dedicated space to isolate symptomatic individuals who become ill during the school day or disclose that they have tested positive for COVID-19. That space should not be used for other purposes.
- Require symptomatic persons to wear a cloth face covering or a procedure mask while waiting to leave the facility or be tested.
  - Cloth face coverings should not be placed on:
    - Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious.
    - Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance.
    - Anyone who cannot tolerate a cloth face covering due to developmental, medical, or behavioral health needs.
- Require school nurses or dedicated school staff who provide direct patient care to wear appropriate Personal

Protective Equipment (PPE) and perform hand hygiene after removing PPE.

- Ensure symptomatic students remain under visual supervision of a staff member who is at least 6 feet away. The supervising adult should wear a cloth face covering or a procedure mask.
- Have a plan for how to transport an ill student or staff member home or to medical care.
- Refer to diagnostic testing individuals who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 at school or disclose recent known close contact to a person with COVID-19.
  - The ability to do rapid testing on site could facilitate COVID-19 diagnosis and inform the need for quarantine of close contacts and isolation
  - Interpretation of tests results can be found at this [link to the CDC antigen algorithm](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/resources/antigen-tests-guidelines.html#using-antigen-tests-community-settings)).  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/resources/antigen-tests-guidelines.html#using-antigen-tests-community-settings>
    - Of note, a person who has symptoms of COVID-19 and has received a negative test for COVID-19 may return to school IF the negative test was either (1) a negative PCR/molecular test or (2) a negative antigen test AND the person has a low likelihood of SARS-CoV-2 infection (i.e., the person has no known or suspected exposure to a person with COVID-19 within the last 14 days or is fully vaccinated).
- Implement cleaning and disinfecting procedures following [CDC guidelines](#).
- Utilize [NCDHHS and the CDC quarantine guidance](#).
- Report to local health authorities any suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases among children and staff (as required by [NCGS § 130A-136](#)).
- Implement the approved school [Contact Tracing Plan](#), OR, If directed by Local Health Department, school administrators coordinate with [health officials](#) to provide contact information for or notify close contacts of a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case among staff, students, and families while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with FERPA, [NCGS § 130A-143](#), and all other state and federal laws.
- Adhere to the following criteria for allowing a student or staff member to return to school: See CDC antigen algorithm for interpretation of antigen tests

Exclusion Category	Scenario	Criteria to return to school
Diagnosis	Person has tested <b>positive</b> with an <b>antigen test</b> but <b>does not have symptoms</b> of COVID-19 and is not known to be a close contact to someone diagnosed with COVID-19.	<p>If the person has a repeat PCR/molecular test performed in a laboratory within 24 – 48 hours of their positive antigen test, and that PCR/molecular test is negative: the positive antigen test can be considered a false positive and the person can immediately return to school; OR</p> <p>If the person does not have a repeat PCR/molecular test, or has one within 24 – 48 hours and it is also positive, the person can return to school <b>5 days</b> after the specimen collection date of the first positive test, as long as they did not develop symptoms. <b>The person must continue to mask for 5 days to minimize risk of infecting others.</b></p> <p>The person is not required to have documentation of a negative test in order to return to school.</p>
Diagnosis	Person has tested <b>positive</b> with a <b>PCR/molecular test</b> but the person does <b>not</b> have symptoms.	Person can return to school <b>5 days</b> after the specimen collection date of their positive test as long as they did not develop symptoms. <b>The person must continue to mask for 5 days post return to minimize risk of infecting others.</b>

Symptoms	Person <b>has symptoms</b> of COVID-19 <u>and</u> has tested <b>positive</b> with an <b>antigen test or PCR/molecular test</b>	<p>Person can return to school when</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It has been at least <b>5</b> days since the first day of symptoms; AND</li> <li>• It has been at least 24 hours since the person had a fever (without using fever reducing medicine); AND</li> <li>• Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving.</li> </ul> <p>The person is not required to have documentation of a negative test in order to return to school.</p>
Symptoms	Person has symptoms of COVID-19 but has <b>not</b> been tested for COVID-19 nor has visited a health care provider. Therefore, the person who has symptoms is presumed positive for COVID-19 due to the presence of a clinically compatible illness in the absence of testing.	<p>Person can return to school when</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It has been at least <b>5</b> days since the first day of symptoms; AND</li> <li>• It has been at least 24 hours since the person had a fever (without using fever reducing medicine); AND</li> <li>• Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving.</li> <li>• The person is not required to have documentation of a negative test in order to return to school.</li> </ul>
Symptoms	Person has symptoms of COVID-19 but has received a negative test for COVID-19* or has visited a health care provider and received a <b>an alternate diagnosis</b> that would explain the symptoms of COVID-19 *In a person with symptoms, a negative test is defined as either (1) a negative PCR/molecular test or (2) a negative antigen test if the person has a low likelihood of SARS-CoV-2 infection (e.g., the person has no known or suspected exposure to a person with COVID-19 within the last 14 days or is fully vaccinated). See CDC antigen algorithm for interpretation of antigen tests	<p>Person can return to school when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It has been at least 24 hours since the person had a fever (without using fever reducing medicine); AND</li> <li>• They have felt well for at least 24 hours.</li> </ul> <p>Note: The health care provider is not required to detail the specifics of the alternate diagnosis.</p>
Exposure	<p>Person who is <b>not up-to-date with all recommended vaccination for their age and has been in close contact with someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19, in which one the persons was not masked.</b></p>	<p><b>If person is unvaccinated OR <u>more than six months out from their second mRNA dose (or more than 2 months after the J&amp;J vaccine) and eligible for booster but not yet boosted</u> they can return to school after completing 5 days of quarantine if asymptomatic, but must complete 5 days of strict mask use. The 5 days of quarantine begin on the day after the last known close contact with the COVID-19 positive individual. They should test on day 5 if possible.</b></p> <p>Alternatively, for people who have completed a primary series but are eligible and have not completed a booster, if a 5-day quarantine is not feasible, it is imperative that an exposed person <u>wear a well-fitting mask</u> at all times when around others for 10 days after exposure.</p> <p>If <u>symptoms occur</u>, person should immediately isolate until a test either confirms COVID-19, or a negative result rules it out.</p>
Exposure	Person has been in close contact with someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19, <b>in which both individuals were wearing a mask the entire time</b> (regardless of vaccination status)	<p><b>Person does not need to be excluded from school if masks were being worn appropriately and consistently by both the person with COVID-19 and the potential exposed person.</b> This applies to exposures in classrooms, other in-school settings, and school transportation but does not apply to exposures during extracurricular activities, including athletic activities.</p>
Exposure	Person is up-to-date with vaccinations recommended for their age (this includes people who have received their booster shot if eligible, or if not eligible for booster have completed their primary vaccination)	<p>Person does not need to be excluded from school if they have had no symptoms after being a close contact to someone with COVID-19, and they do not live in a congregate setting (such as a shelter).</p>

**All schools could consider:**

- Post signage at the main entrance requesting that people who have been symptomatic with fever and/or cough not enter. Examples of signage such as [Know Your Ws/Stop if You Have Symptoms](#) flyers (English: [Color, Black & White](#); Spanish: [Color, Black & White](#)).
- Educate students, families, teachers, and staff about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, when they should stay home, and when they can return to school.
- Schools should also allow flexible, non-punitive, and supportive paid sick leave policies and practices that encourage sick workers to stay home without fear of retaliation, loss of pay, or loss of employment level. Employers should ensure that workers are aware of and understand these policies. Establish and encourage liberal use of sick days for students, provide excused absences for students who are sick, and discontinue attendance-dependent awards and ratings.
- Developing plans for backfilling positions of employees on sick leave and consider cross-training to allow for changes of staff duties.



## Cleaning and Hygiene