

## COVID-19 Guidelines for Quarantine Due to Exposure in a K-12 School Setting

Waukesha County Public Health continues to monitor the spread of COVID-19 and variant strains within the County. While we continue to recommend the best practice of quarantine for close contacts of a known positive case of COVID-19, it may be necessary to adapt procedures in order to both meet the learning needs of students and to address hardship for families imposed by quarantine.

Waukesha County school districts are among the largest in Wisconsin to conduct in-person learning throughout the 2020/2021 school year. Observations from local in-person learning have found very few cases of transmission after COVID-19 exposures in schools. Studies conducted in other US school districts in [Wisconsin](#), [Mississippi](#), [North Carolina](#), and others have observed similar trends. The conclusion reached is that the risk of COVID-19 transmission in school settings is low when preventative measures, primarily mask usage and distancing, are utilized in a monitored environment. Additionally, public health agencies [acknowledge](#) that when schools have layered mitigation measures in place COVID-19 transmission can be limited.

Although children, especially older children and teenagers, can spread COVID-19, recent studies show they appear to transmit the virus less than adults; they [are not thought to be the primary drivers](#) of community transmission. Children, especially aged 10 and younger, are also [less likely to catch or become seriously ill](#) from COVID-19. This lower risk related to children is balanced against negative impacts of academic, social, and economic consequences when making decisions about quarantine.

This information, combined with current case trends, community vaccination rates, and growing access to vaccination among all age groups, have all been considerations as Waukesha County and its school partners relax quarantine guidelines during school programming and school-sponsored activities. Public Health will work with local schools to adapt measures and track the appropriate information to determine the impact on case rate.

### Updated Quarantine Guidelines for School and School-Sponsored Activities

Students and adults identified as a “close contact” to COVID-19 within the K-12 school environment may continue to attend in-person learning if the following guidelines are met:

- **The school has committed to COVID-19 prevention practices**, which include the following: mask wearing, implementing strategies to maximize distance between students, handwashing, ventilation and management of students exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.
- Close contacts remain symptom-free and agree to self-monitor for symptoms a full 14 days following exposure. Close contacts will immediately remove themselves from the school environment if symptoms develop and follow standard isolation protocols
- Close contacts strongly consider getting tested on day 6 or 7 after exposure to help identify asymptomatic cases.

**\*\*\*PLEASE NOTE:** *The above guidelines only apply to exposures occurring in school settings that follow a layered mitigation approach.*

### **Exposures Outside of School Settings**

Students **should not** attend in-person school or participate in organized sports or extracurriculars if their COVID-19 exposure occurred somewhere other than a school setting, which includes gatherings such as parties, sleep overs, etc.

### **Participation in Activities After School-Based Exposure**

Anyone who is not required to quarantine due to exposure occurring in a school setting under the school-based exposure guidance may be permitted to participate in organized sports activities and extracurricular activities if they remain symptom-free and follow applicable guidance. Students and parents should note that organizations governing extracurricular activities may have differing guidelines and requirements for students participating in those activities.

### **What to do After a School-Based Exposure**

Anyone who is a close contact possibly exposed in a school setting should self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days following their last known exposure. Any close contact who develops symptoms should immediately be isolated away from other students and adults and evaluated for COVID-19. Testing for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) is encouraged at the appropriate timing in coordination with the local health department, school, healthcare provider, or parents or guardians.

Close contacts who continue to attend in-person K-12 school and/or to participate in school activities should also follow standard protocols for quarantine when they are not in the K-12 classroom or participating in school-sponsored activities. This includes staying home and, if possible, staying away from people who are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

### **Fully Vaccinated Students Exempted from Quarantine**

As always, students that are fully vaccinated and 2 weeks past completing their vaccine series, are not required to quarantine if they remain symptom free regardless of the source of the exposure (classroom, athletics, workplace, etc.). All individuals eligible to be vaccinated should do so as soon as possible.

To minimize the risk of introduction of COVID-19 into the school setting, students and their parents or guardians should be advised to restrict their activities outside of school settings, including gatherings with unvaccinated individuals outside of their household and activities where face masks cannot be safely or effectively worn.