Recent updates include updated isolation and quarantine guidance to reflect recent changes announced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and additional information and resources regarding Test to Stay (TTS).

No changes are made to the following existing requirements, based on federal government and existing Minnesota Administrative Rules:

**Face masks:** All people are required by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) order to wear face masks while at public transportation hubs and on all public transportation conveyances (airplanes, public buses, etc.), including school buses (both public and private).


**Handling a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19:** Minnesota Rules, part 4605.7070 requires any person in charge of any institution, school, child care facility, or camp to report cases of COVID-19 to MDH.

- Reportable Infectious Diseases: Reportable Diseases A-Z ([www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/reportable/disease.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/reportable/disease.html))
- To report a positive case: COVID-19 Case Report Form for K-12 Schools, Childcares, and Youth Programming (Camps, Sports, Extracurricular Activities) ([https://redcap.health.state.mn.us/redcap/surveys/?s=AD9CT3P3NNFY4A4E](https://redcap.health.state.mn.us/redcap/surveys/?s=AD9CT3P3NNFY4A4E))

While fewer children than adults have become seriously ill with COVID-19 during the pandemic, children can be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, get sick with COVID-19, spread the virus to others, and have severe outcomes from their infection. Vaccine eligibility recently expanded to include school-age children who are ages 5 and older. However, because children under 5 years old are not yet eligible to be vaccinated and children ages 5 to 11 only recently became eligible, there remains an increased risk of COVID-19 transmission in school settings. The introduction of new variants of COVID-19 as well as
increasing rates of vaccination among adults and adolescents may also impact the epidemiology and incidence of COVID-19 among this population.

Therefore, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), in alignment with current scientific evidence and guidance from CDC, strongly recommends staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations, in addition to the continued consistent use of layered mitigation strategies to help limit the spread of COVID-19. These strategies help support in-person learning and protect people who are not fully vaccinated, including children, students, teachers, staff, and members of their households. This recommendation is grounded in the knowledge that the benefits of being physically present in school are significant and creating conditions that help safeguard in-person instruction is a priority.

MDH recommends schools plan, prepare, and respond using CDC guidance at Schools, Child Care, and Colleges (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html) as best practice recommendations to inform their efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health and safety of their school communities. CDC has published a guidance document outlining strategies for reducing the spread of COVID-19 and maintaining school operations:


CDC guidance was designed to inform the selection of effective layered prevention strategies for different learning environments based on changes in the level of transmission of COVID-19 occurring in the communities. Schools should maintain awareness of COVID-19 transmission levels in their local community and the vaccination status of the population they serve when making determinations about the use of layered COVID-19 prevention strategies in their facilities.

For example, higher rates of COVID-19 transmission coupled with low vaccination rates increases the likelihood that children and staff will attend while infectious and may indicate the need to use additional layers of protection. Similarly, program staff should regularly monitor for outbreaks and changing trends in the school and surrounding community and review their prevention strategies accordingly.

Community transmission and vaccination coverage in the local community can be monitored using CDC’s COVID Data Tracker. Be sure to select the state and county as well as the type of data you would like to view (transmission or vaccination):

- CDC COVID Data Tracker (https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view)

CDC continues to recommend masking and physical distancing as key prevention strategies, especially for people who are not fully vaccinated. CDC advises that if administrators choose to remove either one of these strategies or any other prevention strategies based on local conditions, the best practice is to remove them one at a time and monitor closely for any resulting increases in COVID-19 cases.

It is strongly recommended that programs develop mitigation plans with input from students, teachers, staff, families, and the community and communicate strategies and any changes through accessible materials and communication channels. This includes translating information for students and families.

For a summary of evidence on the impact of COVID-19 among children and adolescents as well as scientific evidence on what is known about preventing transmission in school settings, MDH strongly recommends

**CDC best practice prevention strategies to reduce transmission of COVID-19**

The remainder of this document serves as a resource to support implementation of CDC best practices for reducing transmission of COVID-19. It briefly outlines each of the layered prevention strategies and provides reference links to Minnesota-specific supplemental resources and other relevant toolkits. CDC emphasizes the following layered prevention strategies:

- Promoting vaccination
- Consistent and correct mask use
- Physical distancing and cohorts
- Screening testing
- Ventilation
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
- Staying home when sick and getting tested
- Contact tracing in combination with isolation, quarantine, and Test to Stay (TTS)
- Cleaning and disinfection

**Promoting vaccination**

For detailed information, visit:

CDC: Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools: Promoting Vaccination
(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html#vaccination)

CDC encourages schools to promote COVID-19 vaccination 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.

**Resources to support promoting vaccination:**

- CDC: Stay Up to Date With Your Vaccines (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html)
- Host a Community COVID-19 Vaccination Event (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/hostevent.html)
- Be a Vaccine Advocate: COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit for Individuals and Organizations (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/communitytk.html)
Consistent and correct mask use

For detailed information, visit:


Recommendations for Wearing Masks (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html)


Universal indoor masking is recommended for all people in the school setting (ages 2 and older), including teachers, staff, students, and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status.

Masks should also be worn in the following situations:

- Indoor businesses and public settings and crowded outdoor settings in areas with substantial or high transmission. Refer to the map on CDC COVID Data Tracker: COVID-19 Integrated County View (https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view) to find community transmission levels in your county.

Resources to support consistent and correct mask use:

- For Businesses: Mask Signs (mn.gov/covid19/share-our-message/for-businesses/index.jsp)
- CDC: Guidance for Direct Service Providers (www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/humandevelopment/covid-19/guidance-for-direct-service-providers.html)

Physical distancing and cohorts

For detailed information, visit:


Schools should implement physical distancing to the extent possible indoors; however, because of the essential services schools provide, children should not be excluded from in-person learning or care to maintain a minimum distance requirement. When it is not possible to maintain physical distance in these settings, it is especially important to layer multiple prevention strategies, such as indoor masking, screening
testing, forming cohorts, and staying home when sick with symptoms of infectious illness to help reduce transmission risk.

To reduce transmission risk in the school setting, CDC recommends maintaining at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms whenever feasible and indoor mask wearing by people who are not fully vaccinated. CDC continues to recommend maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet between students and staff as well as 6 feet of distance between staff who are not fully vaccinated.

CDC recommends maximizing physical distance as much as possible when moving through food service lines and while eating (especially indoors). Using additional spaces outside of the cafeteria for mealtime seating, such as the gymnasium or outdoor seating, can help facilitate distancing.

Resources on physical distancing and cohorts:

- Stay 6 feet from others (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials/6feet.pdf)
- Social Distancing at Work (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials/socdistwork.pdf)

Screening testing

For detailed information, visit:

Screening testing identifies infected persons, both those with and without symptoms, who may be contagious, so that measures can be taken to prevent further exposures and transmission. In the setting of K-12 schools, screening testing can help identify and isolate cases as well as inform quarantine of those who may have been exposed to COVID-19 and are not up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations, all of which support the prompt identification of clusters and help limit spread. Screening testing is particularly valuable in areas experiencing substantial or high community transmission levels; in areas with low vaccination coverage; and in schools where other prevention strategies are not implemented.

Minnesota-specific information on screening testing programs in K-12 schools is available at COVID-19 Testing During the 2021-22 School Year (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/testing.html).

Screening testing and Test to Stay (TTS) are distinct mitigation strategies that are intended to complement, not replace one another. Screening testing is intended to identify persons who are infected but without symptoms in the general school community regardless of whether they have known exposure to COVID-19. Whereas, TTS is a practice that uses contact tracing and serial testing to allow close contacts who are not up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations and were exposed to COVID-19 at school to continue in-person learning during their quarantine period. More information on TTS is included in the contact tracing in combination with isolation, quarantine, and Test to Stay (TTS) section below.
Ventilation

For detailed information, visit:

Ventilation is an important factor in minimizing COVID-19 transmission indoors. Facility operators are strongly recommended to evaluate the operational capacity of ventilation systems and increase and maintain ventilation throughout the building. This can be done by opening multiple doors and windows, using child-safe fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows, and making changes to the HVAC or air filtration systems.

Resources to support ventilation improvements:
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response Resources from ASHRAE and Others (www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/resources)

Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

For detailed information, visit:

People should practice handwashing and respiratory etiquette (covering coughs and sneezes) to keep from getting and spreading infectious illnesses, including COVID-19. Schools can monitor and reinforce these behaviors and provide adequate handwashing supplies.

Schools should build routines of hand hygiene into the daily schedule for all students and staff, including handwashing and sanitation breaks during or between classroom activities. This includes teaching and reinforcing handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and the safe use by staff and older children of hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Resources to support handwashing and respiratory etiquette:
- Hand Hygiene (www.health.state.mn.us/people/handhygiene/index.html)
- Hand Hygiene Print Materials (www.health.state.mn.us/people/handhygiene/materials.html)
- Cover Your Cough (www.health.state.mn.us/people/cyc/index.html)
- CDC Handwashing: Health Promotion Materials (www.cdc.gov/handwashing/materials.html)
Staying home when sick and getting tested

For detailed information, visit:  
CDC: Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools: Staying Home When Sick and Getting Tested  
(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html#staying-home)

Staying home when sick with symptoms of COVID-19 is essential to keep infectious diseases, such as influenza and COVID-19, out of the school setting. Schools should educate staff, children, and families about the signs and symptoms of infectious diseases like influenza and COVID-19, when their children should stay home, and when they may return to the program.

Resources:

The Hennepin County Infectious Disease Manual is a guide that many schools across the state use for infectious disease identification and prevention that includes resources for COVID-19.

- Hennepin County: Infectious Diseases in Childcare Settings and Schools Manual  
  (www.hennepin.us/daycaremanual)

Sending sick people home

If a student or staff member becomes ill with COVID-19-like symptoms while in attendance, they should immediately be sent home, regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status or prior history of disease. Symptomatic students or staff who are waiting to be picked up should put on a mask if not already wearing one and should be isolated in a designated space. Students should remain under the visual supervision of a staff member while in isolation on school property. Symptomatic persons should be isolated separately whenever possible; however, if it is not feasible to maintain separate spaces, physical distancing should be implemented to the extent possible in the shared space.

Resources on testing and managing illness in a program:

- COVID-19 Testing  
  (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/index.html)
- COVID-19 Testing Recommendations  
  (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials/testrecs.pdf)
- Materials and Resources for COVID-19 Response: For schools  
  (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials/index.html#school)
- National Association of School Nurses: COVID-19 Reference  
  (https://schoolnursesnet.nasn.org/covid19ref/home)
Contact tracing in combination with isolation, quarantine, and Test to Stay (TTS)

For detailed information, visit:
CDC: Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools: Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html#contact-tracing)

Isolation involves staying home and away from others when you test positive or have COVID-19 symptoms. Isolation is different from quarantine.

Quarantine involves staying home and away from others when you may have been exposed to the virus. If people have symptoms or test positive for COVID-19 while in quarantine, they should immediately begin the process of isolation.

Schools should be prepared to respond quickly when someone with COVID-19 has been in the school or at a school event to ensure isolation and quarantine protocols are followed appropriately. In these instances, contact tracing serves as an important strategy through which exposed individuals (close contacts) are notified of their potential exposure to a confirmed case and can take appropriate actions (such as quarantine, testing, and wearing a mask) to help prevent any further spread of the virus.

For information on handling confirmed cases of COVID-19, including isolation, contact tracing, and quarantine of close contacts, review:

- If You Are Sick or Test Positive: COVID-19 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html)
- Close Contacts and Quarantine: COVID-19 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/close.html)

Test to Stay (TTS)

Test to Stay (TTS) is a practice comprised of robust contact tracing and serial testing to allow close contacts exposed to COVID-19 at school (household exposures are not eligible) who are **not up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations** to continue in-person learning during their quarantine period. Because close contacts who are up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations are not required to quarantine following exposure, they would not be included in TTS. Schools may consider TTS as an option for keeping asymptomatic close contacts who are not up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations and do not test positive for COVID-19 in the classroom as an alternative to traditional quarantine at home. TTS is a valuable tool intended to complement existing layered prevention strategies. Students who participate in TTS should, at a minimum:

- Consistently and correctly wear masks at all times while in school (except when eating or drinking).
- Conduct serial testing (testing that is repeated at least twice during a seven-day period following their exposure at school).
- Stay home and isolate if they develop symptoms or test positive for COVID-19.

The CDC has published two studies describing local approaches to TTS. Schools should review the MMWR reports list below, to see how other school districts implemented TTS, including eligibility criteria for TTS and duration of in-school monitoring, testing type, how often to test, and other relevant considerations.

- **MMWR: Evaluation of Test to stay Strategy on Secondary and Tertiary Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in K-12 Schools - Lake County, Illinois, August 9-October 29, 2021** ([www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm705152e2.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm705152e2.htm))
- **MMWR: Evaluation of a Test to Stay Strategy in Transitional Kindergarten Through Grade 12 Schools - Los Angeles County, California, August 16 - October 31, 2021** ([www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm705152e1.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm705152e1.htm))

Additional resources with information on Test to Stay:


**Cleaning and disinfection**

For detailed information, visit:  

The virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly spread by respiratory droplets. The virus can also be spread by touching a surface contaminated with virus and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth, although this is not the primary way the virus spreads.
In general, cleaning once a day is enough to sufficiently remove potential virus that may be on surfaces. Disinfecting (using disinfectants on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency COVID-19 list) removes any remaining germs on surfaces, which further reduces any risk of spreading infection.

A daily schedule should be established for routine environmental cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces in classrooms and common spaces. Routine environmental cleaning should be scheduled when students and teachers are not occupying the space.

**Resources to support cleaning and disinfection:**