

## **Watch for Symptoms**

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Anyone can have mild to severe symptoms. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- 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

NOTE: This list does not include all possible symptoms. CDC will continue to update this list as we learn more about COVID-19. Older adults and people who have severe underlying medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness.

## **Difference between COVID-19 & Traditional Flu**

Influenza (Flu) and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses. COVID-19 is caused by infection with a new coronavirus (called SARS-CoV-2), and flu is caused by infection with [influenza viruses](#). Because some of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar, it may be hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone, and [testing](#) may be needed to help confirm a diagnosis.

COVID-19 seems to spread more easily than flu and causes more serious illnesses in some people. It can also take longer before people show symptoms and people can be contagious for longer. More information about differences between flu and COVID-19 is available on the CDC website.

NOTE: While more is learned about COVID-19 (and the virus that causes it) each day, there is still a lot that is unknown. This page compares COVID-19 and flu, given the best available information to date.

## **Prevention Strategies to Reduce Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) in Schools**

CDC recommends that all teachers, staff and eligible students be vaccinated as soon as possible, including the booster. However, schools have a mixed population of both people who are fully vaccinated and people who are not fully vaccinated. This requires K-12 administrators to make decisions about the use of COVID-19 prevention strategies in their schools and is why CDC recommends universal indoor masking regardless of vaccination status at all levels of community transmission.

Together with local public health officials, school administrators should consider multiple factors when they make decisions about implementing layered prevention strategies against COVID-19. Since schools typically serve their surrounding communities, decisions should be based on the school population, families and students served, as well as their communities. The primary factors to consider include:

- Level of [community transmission](#) of COVID-19.
- [COVID-19 vaccination coverage](#) in the community and among students, teachers, and staff.
- Strain on health system capacity for the community.

- Use of a frequent SARS-CoV-2 screening testing program for students, teachers, and staff who are not fully vaccinated. Testing provides an important layer of prevention, particularly in areas with substantial to high community transmission levels.
- COVID-19 outbreaks, or increasing trends of them, in the school or surrounding community.
- Ages of children served by K-12 schools and the associated social and behavioral factors that may affect risk of transmission and the feasibility of different prevention strategies.

## **To Quarantine or Not to Quarantine?**

Quarantine is staying home, away from other people, and wearing a mask, the whole time, if you must be around other people.

Who should quarantine?

People who are *not* [fully vaccinated](#) and are determined to be a [close contact](#) of someone with COVID-19 need to [quarantine](#). Please refer to the [Steps for Determining Close Contact and Quarantine in K–12 Schools infographic](#), on the CDC website, to help determine who is a close contact.

They should:

- Get tested immediately and [quarantine](#) (stay at home and away from other people) immediately for a period of 5-7 days from the date of their last exposure, unless they receive different instructions from their school official or a public health official.
- If they initially test negative, test again 5-7 days after the date of their last known exposure and continue to [quarantine](#) for the full 14 days. If they initially test negative, test again 5-7 days after the date of their last known exposure to determine if they have developed COVID-19 as early as possible. If this test is negative, continue to quarantine for the remainder of the 14-day quarantine period. [Isolate](#) immediately if they develop [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 or test positive.
- If the person who is quarantining does not develop symptoms of COVID-19 and does not test positive on the two tests, that person can go back into public spaces, including school, on day 15.

Who does NOT need quarantine?

- People who have tested positive for COVID-19 on a [viral test](#) within the past 90 days **and** have subsequently recovered **and** remain without COVID-19 symptoms *do not* need to [quarantine](#). However, close contacts with prior COVID-19 infection in the previous 90 days should:
  - [Wear a mask](#) indoors in public for 14 days after exposure.
  - Monitor for [COVID-19 symptoms](#) and [isolate](#) immediately if symptoms develop
  - Consult with a healthcare professional for testing recommendations if new symptoms develop.
- People who are [fully vaccinated](#) *do not* need to [quarantine](#) if they come into [close contact](#) with someone diagnosed with COVID-19. They should:
  - Get tested 5-7 days after their last known exposure—even if they don't have symptoms.
  - Wear a mask indoors in public for 10 days following their last exposure or until they test negative, twice, 5-7 days apart.
  - Monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 for 10 days and get tested and isolate immediately if they develop [symptoms](#) of COVID-19.

Even though fully vaccinated people and people with prior infection in the past 90 days who are determined to be a close contact are not required to [quarantine](#), they are expected to wear a mask for 10 days indoors in

public, or for fully vaccinated people, until they have a negative test. Please note that everyone, regardless of vaccination status, should wear a mask in areas of substantial to high transmission in indoor public settings, whether or not they have been exposed. Everyone should also wear a [mask in K–12 schools](#) at all times, regardless of vaccination status and the level of community transmission. The school should ensure there is a plan for fully vaccinated close contacts to stay masked at all times indoors. During times in the school day when students or staff members may typically remove masks indoors (such as during lunches, snacks, band practice, etc.), have a plan for them to adequately distance from others and ensure they wear their masks when not actively participating in these activities (such as when they are not actively eating).