

COVID-19: WHEN A STUDENT, OR FACULTY/STAFF MEMBER CAN RETURN TO SCHOOL

Purpose: The purpose of this document is to assist school health care staff and public health officials in determining if a student, or faculty/staff member needs to be excluded from the facility for COVID-19 quarantine or isolation. The chart uses three criteria to determine this: close contact, symptoms, and COVID-19 test status.

How to use: The first step is to determine if the individual was a close contact to a COVID-19 case based on the definition below and then selecting the appropriate chart on the next page. The second step is to determine if the individual is showing symptoms of COVID-19 (symptomatic) or not. Finally determine if they were tested for COVID-19 and the result of the test. Key definitions are provided below:

Isolation means keeping sick people away from healthy ones. This usually means that the sick person rests in their own bedroom or area of their home and stays away from others. This includes staying home from school.

Quarantine means separating people who were around someone who was sick, just in case they get sick. Since people who were around other sick people are more likely to get sick themselves, quarantine prevents them from accidentally spreading the virus to other people even before they realize they are sick. Usually people who are in quarantine stay at home and avoid going out or being around other people. This includes staying home from school. You can develop COVID-19 anytime during the 10 days after your last close contact with someone who has COVID-19. In order to prevent spreading COVID-19 to others, you must quarantine, which means you must stay home from work, school, and other activities.

When quarantining, you should always:

- Monitor your symptoms for 10 days after your last exposure to COVID-19 and get tested as soon as possible if you develop symptoms. If positive, follow isolation guidance for people who test positive; if negative, continue quarantining and masking.
- Stay home from school, work, and other activities for at least 5 days after your last exposure to COVID-19 (date of exposure is day 0). Wear a mask around others at home.
- If you haven't developed symptoms, get tested at least 5 days after exposure if possible. If positive, follow isolation guidance for people who test positive; if negative, continue masking for 10 days after your exposure.
- You may return to school, work, and other activities on day 6 after your exposure if you are able to wear a mask. You should wear a well-fitting mask around others at home and in public for 10 days after your exposure. If you can't wear a mask, you should quarantine at home for 10 days.

Close contact: An individual is considered a close contact if **any** of following is true:

- Were within 6 feet of a positive person for more than 15 minutes total in a day.
- Had physical contact with the person.
- Had direct contact with the respiratory secretions of the person (i.e., from coughing, sneezing, contact with dirty tissue, shared drinking glass, food, or personal items).
- Lives with or stayed overnight for at least one night in a household with the person.

According to the [CDC close contact exception](#), the definition of a close contact can be excepted in specific circumstances in the K-12 classroom. More specifically, if two students are engaged in consistent and correct use of well-fitting masking and are not within 3 feet of each other, they would not be considered close contacts. This means that if one of the masks students were to become infected with COVID-19, the other masked student would not have to quarantine from school.

The following close contacts do not need to quarantine but do need to follow other precautions outlined below. All other close contacts not included in the groups below need to quarantine as described in the quarantine section.

- Close contacts who were diagnosed with COVID in the 90 days before the exposure do not need to quarantine. Close contacts who've had COVID in the past 90 days should wear a mask in public indoor settings for 10 days and consult a health care provider about testing if they develop symptoms.
- Close contacts 17 years and younger who completed a COVID vaccine series two or more weeks before the exposure do not need to quarantine. These individuals should wear a mask in public indoor settings for 10 days after their exposure and get tested at least 5 days after their exposure if possible.
- Close contacts 18 years and older who completed a COVID vaccine series two or more weeks ago and are 1) not yet [eligible for a booster dose](#) or 2) have received a booster dose do not need to quarantine. These individuals should wear a mask in public indoor settings for 10 days after their exposure and get tested at least 5 days after their exposure if possible.

Symptoms

Symptoms are considered consistent with COVID-19 when one of the symptoms marked with a (^) or two of the other symptoms are present above baseline for that individual.

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

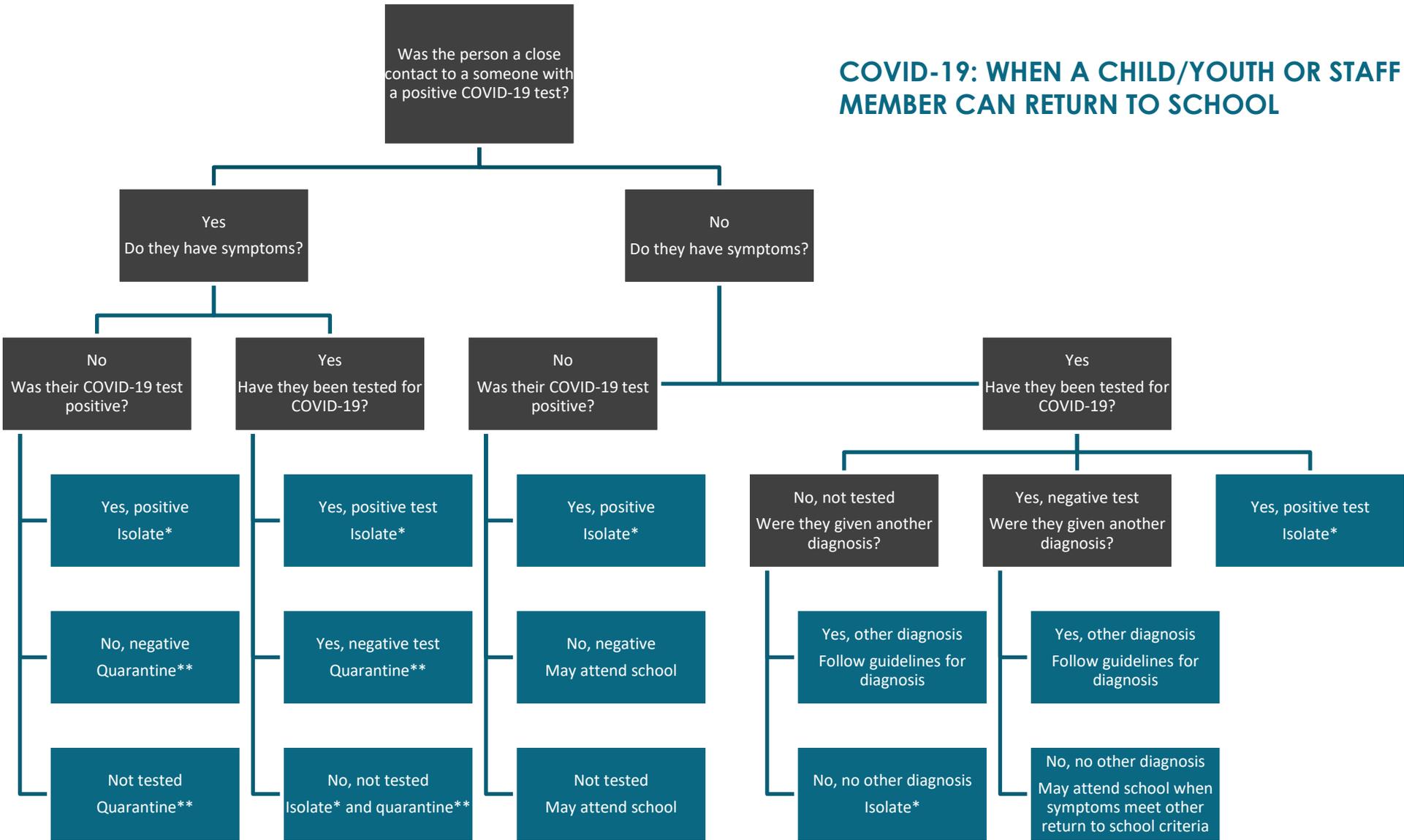
Individual is NOT a known close contact to a COVID-19 case:

Individual	Symptomatic	No Symptoms
Not tested for COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual must remain home until they have been fever free without the use of fever-reducing medications for 24 hours AND with improvement of symptoms AND for either 5 days after symptom onset followed by 5 days of masking in school OR 10 days after symptom onset if a mask can't worn. Siblings and household members do not need to be excluded (different from DHS guidance). If diagnosed with another condition that explains the symptoms, such as influenza or strep throat, follow guidance from the health care provider and exclusion period of the diagnosed disease as listed on the Wisconsin Childhood Communicable Diseases Wall Chart 	May attend school.
Tested and negative for COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual must be fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications If diagnosed with another condition, the individual must complete the exclusion period for the diagnosed disease as listed on the Wisconsin Childhood Communicable Diseases Wall Chart. An alternative diagnosis is not required. 	May attend school.
Tested and positive for COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual must isolate at home for at least 5 days since the first symptoms began AND be fever free without the use of fever-reducing medications for 24 hours AND with improvement in symptoms. The individual should wear a well-fitting mask during days 6-10. Repeat testing is NOT required for making decisions about when people can return to work or school. If someone wants to get tested, they should use an antigen test. If an individual can't wear a mask they should isolate at home for 10 days. Siblings, household members, and other close contacts should follow the close contact chart below. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must isolate at home for 5 days after the day the sample was collected and wear a mask during days 6-10. Isolate at home for 10 days if they can't wear a mask. Siblings, household members, and other close contacts should follow the close contact chart below.

Individual IS a known close contact to a COVID-19 case:

Individual	Symptomatic	No Symptoms
Not tested for COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual must remain home until they have been fever free without the use of fever-reducing medications for 24 hours AND with improvement of symptoms AND for either 5 days after symptom onset followed by 5 days of masking in school OR 10 days after symptom onset if a mask can't worn, regardless of vaccination status. The individual must also quarantine if they are not in one of the exception groups above. The quarantine starts after the last contact with the COVID-19 positive person (see first page for other quarantine guidance). If the exposure is to a household member and the case cannot properly isolate away from others at home, the last date of contact may be the last day of isolation for the case. Individuals in the exception groups above do not need to quarantine. Siblings and household members do not need to be excluded (different from DHS guidance). 	Individuals not in the exception groups above must quarantine (see first page) from the date of last exposure before returning to school or day care. If the exposure is to a household member and the case cannot properly isolate away from others at home, the last date of contact may be the last day of isolation for the case. Individuals in the exception groups above do not need to quarantine.
Tested and negative for COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual must be fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications AND if diagnosed with another condition, they must complete the exclusion period for the diagnosed disease as listed on the Wisconsin Childhood Communicable Diseases Wall Chart, regardless of vaccination status. An alternative diagnosis is not required. The individual must also quarantine if they are not in one of the exception groups above. The quarantine starts after the last contact with the COVID-19 positive person (see first page for other quarantine guidance). If the exposure is to a household member and the case cannot properly isolate away from others at home, the last date of contact may be the last day of isolation for the case. Individuals in the exception groups above do not need to quarantine. 	Individuals not in the exception groups above must quarantine (see first page) from the date of last exposure before returning to school or day care. If the exposure is to a household member and the case cannot properly isolate away from others at home, the last date of contact may be the last day of isolation for the case. Individuals in the exception groups above do not need to quarantine.
Tested and positive for COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual must isolate at home for at least 5 days since the first symptoms began AND be fever free without the use of fever-reducing medications for 24 hours AND with improvement in symptoms. The individual should wear a mask during days 6-10. Repeat testing is NOT required for making decisions about when people can return to work or school. If someone wants to get tested, they should use an antigen test. If an individual can't wear a mask they should isolate at home for 10 days. Siblings, household members, and other close contacts should also follow this chart to determine quarantine length. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must isolate at home for 5 days after the day the sample was collected and wear a mask during days 6-10. Isolate at home for 10 days if they can't wear a mask. Siblings, household members, and other close contacts should follow this chart to determine quarantine length.

COVID-19: WHEN A CHILD/YOUTH OR STAFF MEMBER CAN RETURN TO SCHOOL



*Isolate: Individual should not attend/work at school until it has been at least 5 days since symptom onset, they have been fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medications), and their other symptoms are improving. They should wear a mask during days 6-10. If they can't wear a mask they should isolate for 10 days.

Quarantine: Individual should not attend/work at school until quarantine is complete, following their last exposure to a person who was infectious. See page 1 for quarantine guidance and **note the close contact exception for fully masked students in the K-12 environment. See page 1 for groups that do not need to quarantine after close contact.

When calculating isolation and quarantine, the date of symptom onset/positive lab test (for asymptomatic) or last date of exposure to an infectious person is day 0. For example, individuals may return to school on day 6 (isolation).