



Chester County Health Department

COVID-19 Updated Quarantine & Isolation FAQ

January 4, 2022

Purpose: On December 27, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its [quarantine and isolation guidance for COVID-19](#). This document serves as a repository of frequently asked questions from schools and daycares regarding CDC's guidance. ***All information contained in this FAQ is subject to change at any time.***

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. Q: How has the updated guidance changed quarantine?
A: Unvaccinated/not boosted individuals identified as a close contact to a COVID case should quarantine for a 5-day period from their last date of exposure. If they remain asymptomatic throughout the 5 days, they can return on day 6. Testing is recommended on day 5, if possible. Upon return on day 6, they must wear a well-fitting mask for the next 5 days, regardless of the schools current masking policy.
2. Q: How has the updated guidance changed isolation?
A: Someone who tests positive for COVID is required to stay home and isolate for a 5-day period from their symptom onset date/test date if they are asymptomatic. After their 5-day isolation, if they are asymptomatic or their symptoms are resolving (without fever for 24 hours), they can return to school on day 6. Upon return, they must wear a well-fitting mask for an additional 5 days, regardless of the schools current masking policy.
3. Q: Who does NOT have to quarantine after a COVID exposure?
A: You do not need to quarantine if:
 - You are ages 18 or older and have received all recommended vaccine doses, including boosters and additional primary shots for some immunocompromised people.
 - You are ages 5-17 years and completed the primary series of COVID-19 vaccines.
 - You had confirmed COVID-19 within the last 90 days (you tested positive using a viral test).A: You should still wear a well-fitting mask around others for 10 days from the date of your last COVID exposure, regardless of the schools current masking policy. Testing is recommended on day 5, if possible.
4. Q: What does "unvaccinated/not boosted" mean?
A: Unvaccinated means an individual has not received a COVID vaccine. Not boosted means the appropriate time has passed for an individual to receive a booster, and they have not received one. Currently, not boosted includes those who have:
 - Completed the primary series of Pfizer vaccine over 5 months ago and did not receive a booster; OR



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- Completed the primary series of Moderna vaccine over 6 months ago and did not receive a booster; OR
 - Completed the primary series of J&J over 2 months ago and have not received a booster
5. Q: Is an individual considered boosted right after the dose?
A: No, an individual is considered booster 2 weeks after receiving the booster dose.
6. Q: Do people who are not eligible for boosters need to quarantine after a COVID exposure?
A: No. People who are not eligible for boosters who have completed a Pfizer vaccination series, or others who are not currently eligible for a booster but have completed a Moderna, Pfizer, or J&J primary vaccination series are included in the group of people who do not need to quarantine after a COVID exposure, yet they should wear a well-fitting mask for 10 days following their last date of exposure, regardless of the schools current masking policy. Testing is recommended on day 5, if possible.
7. Q: Do people ages 16-17 years old who are eligible for a booster need to quarantine if they have not received a booster vaccine?
A: No. people ages 16-17 years who have completed a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination but have not received a booster dose do not need to quarantine after having close contact with a COVID case, yet they should wear a well-fitting mask for 10 days following their last date of exposure, regardless of the schools current masking policy. Testing is recommended on day 5, if possible.
A: This differs from guidance for adults because CDC's current recommendations say that adolescents ages 16-17 years may get a booster, not that they should get a booster.
8. Q: How does an unvaccinated/not boosted individual calculate their quarantine period if a household contact has COVID?
A: If a household contact has COVID and cannot completely isolate away from the others within the home, the household contact's 5-day quarantine starts after the COVID case completes their 5-day isolation period, assuming the COVID case's symptoms resolve/improve in those 5 days. When they return to school after their quarantine is complete, pending they have remained asymptomatic, they should wear a well-fitting mask for an additional 5 days, regardless of the schools current masking policy. Testing is recommended on day 5, if possible.
- Please note the quarantine period for on-going exposure of household contacts does not start until the person with COVID has completed 5 days of isolation and is asymptomatic or their symptoms are resolving (without fever for 24 hours).



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9. Q: Day 1 vs. Day 0?

A: There has been no change to what constitutes "day 1/day 0," or how days of quarantine and isolation period are counted. For quarantine, last date of exposure should be counted as day 0 and count 5 days forward. For isolation, symptom onset date or test date if asymptomatic should be counted as day 0 and count 5 days forward.

- Use of the [Isolation/Quarantine Calculator](#) is encouraged.

10. Q: What does testing "if possible" mean pertaining to the updated quarantine guidance?

A: There are several reasons for this. Tests for SARS-CoV-2 are best used early in the course of illness to diagnose COVID-19 and are not authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to evaluate duration of infectiousness. Additionally, access to a test cannot be guaranteed (for many reasons including supply challenges).

11. Q: Are at-home tests acceptable?

A: It is up to your school district whether you accept at-home testing or not. If at-home tests are accepted, they should only use those that have received an EUA. For the most current list of at-home COVID tests that have an FDA EUA, visit <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-emergency-use-authorizations-medical-devices/in-vitro-diagnostics-euas-antigen-diagnostic-tests-sars-cov-2>. Filter the list on this website by entering "home" in the search.

12. Q: Why did CCHD indicate to discontinue contact tracing in the classroom setting?

A: We know that the classroom is usually the most controlled setting, as masks can be worn and monitored, and 3 feet distance is generally able to be maintained. Congregate settings at school such as the lunchroom, recess, sports, etc., are less controlled, resulting in a higher risk for transmission. Therefore, we advise the schools prioritize these higher risk settings when conducting their contact tracing efforts. We also recognize that with such an increase in cases, contact tracing is becoming more difficult.

13. Q: How has reporting changed for the K-12 school setting?

A: We are no longer requiring schools to submit a disease report form for each positive student/staff in school. You can discontinue doing this NOW. You do not need to back track if you have cases from before or over the winter break and you have not yet reported them to us. Please be sure to include them on the bi-weekly line list you will now send in to disschools@chesco.org. You should have received a previous email with the data points that should be captured in this line list. When sending in this



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email, please put your school district name, and name of the specific school in the subject line. Excel format is preferred, but we will accept any version other than a PDF. If you have further questions, please let us know and we are happy to review your line list template prior to submitting on January 14.

14. Q: What if we have children/staff in the K-12 school setting with a mask exemption?

A: Those who have a mask exemption should complete a full 10-day quarantine period/isolation period at home, as they cannot return for the remaining 5 days with a mask on.

15. Q: How does the Chester County testing supply look through Project Ace-It?

A: There is a nationwide shortage of BinaxNOW Antigen Test Kits. CHOP is continuously working to secure tests, yet currently they are only receiving a small number of tests at a time. Their shipments are currently less frequent than anticipated due to this shortage. There is a strong likelihood you may run out of antigen tests before the next shipment arrives. As a result of this current shortage, please adjust your testing to prioritize the following:

- Symptomatic individuals on site
- On day 5 of quarantine (if supplies allow and school is offering it.)