



Health Alert Network Message 21-68: Reminder to Healthcare Providers of Existing Guidance Regarding Isolation, Quarantine, and Post-exposure Testing Recommendations for K-12 Students

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Revision Dates (List All Revision Dates):

LDH Reminds Healthcare Providers of Existing Guidance Regarding Isolation, Quarantine, and Post-exposure Testing Recommendations for K-12 Students

The Louisiana Department of Health has noted a sharp increase in COVID-19 infections among children younger than 18 years of age. Severe health outcomes among pediatric patients, including Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) and COVID-associated deaths among children younger than 18 are also increasing. Seventeen MIS-C cases and 2 pediatric deaths were reported during a recent weekly reporting period; these counts are higher than any other week during the pandemic to date.

Vaccination of all eligible Louisiana residents is best way to protect children, including those who are not yet eligible for a SARS-CoV-2 vaccine. Isolation and quarantine also remain important tools for disease control in this population. With the start of the school year and the return of most K-12 students to in-person learning, LDH is reminding health care providers of existing guidance regarding isolation, quarantine and post-exposure testing recommendations for K-12 students.

Isolation

Who is it for?

- People who are **infected** with SARS-CoV-2 (with or without COVID-19 symptoms)
- Applies to **both** fully vaccinated and not fully vaccinated people.

Duration:

- People may end isolation 10 days after symptom onset (or 10 days after the date of the first positive SARS-CoV-2 RT-PCR test result for people who don't have symptoms) **and** after resolution of fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications and with improvement of other symptoms
- **A test-based strategy should not be used to end isolation for most people***
 - *For those who are severely ill or severely immunocompromised, a test-based strategy could be considered in consultation with infectious disease experts
- A negative test or doctor's note should **not** be required for return to school upon completion of the 10 days of isolation with improvement of symptoms

Quarantine

Who is it for?

- For asymptomatic individuals who may have been in **close contact** to someone infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus
 - Close contact: within 6 feet of someone infected with SARS-CoV-2 for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24 hour period
 - Exceptions:
 - If both the case and the contact were engaged in consistent and correct use of a well-fitting face mask AND were ≥ 3 feet of each other and remain asymptomatic (only applies to K-12 students who are close contacts of other students in a classroom setting).
 - Individuals who are fully vaccinated (i.e., ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or ≥ 2 following receipt of one dose in a single dose vaccine) at the time of exposure and remain asymptomatic.
 - Individuals who were previously diagnosed with COVID-19 within the last 90 days and remain asymptomatic.

Duration:

The recommended quarantine length is 14 days, however, schools can choose to use shortened quarantine options. School policies regarding quarantine length will differ and parents should be advised to consult with their school to determine the appropriate quarantine length for their student. Options to shorten quarantine include:

- If no symptoms develop during quarantine **AND** they have a negative antigen or PCR/molecular test collected no earlier than day 5 after their last exposure: they may quarantine for 7 days from last contact with a COVID-19 case **OR**
- If no symptoms develop during quarantine and no testing is done: they may quarantine for 10 days from last contact with a COVID-19 case.

Testing of Close Contacts

With the exception of asymptomatic individuals who have tested positive in the last 90 days, when a person is identified as a close contact to a case, testing is recommended as soon as possible after notification. If negative, they should be tested again 5-7 days post-exposure.

- **Close contacts exempt from quarantine:** Inability to obtain a test at the recommended intervals should not prevent an asymptomatic individual exempt from quarantine from returning to school.
- **Close contacts required to quarantine:** Testing between days 5-7 post-exposure allows quarantined individuals with a negative test to return to school after 7 days. A negative test collected earlier than day 5 post-exposure cannot be used to allow an individual to return to school.

Alternative Diagnosis for Re-admittance to School

An alternative diagnosis should be a more likely cause for the presenting symptoms and may be confirmed with testing (i.e., positive strep test). Sending an individual back into the school environment with an alternative diagnosis (i.e., URI, allergies, sinusitis, etc.) when COVID-19 has not appropriately been ruled-out can put other children and staff at risk for COVID-19 infection.

Individuals presenting with symptoms of COVID-19 should receive a SARS-CoV-2 test. If an antigen test is performed and is negative, a confirmatory PCR should be collected. That individual should remain in isolation while confirmatory test results are pending. If the confirmatory PCR test is negative, they can return to school. Symptomatic students or staff should complete a 10-day isolation if they only receive a negative antigen test and do not receive a confirmatory PCR test with a negative result.