



COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2)

Reportable to local or state health department.

Consult the health department before posting or distributing the Parent/Guardian fact sheet.

COVID-19 is an acute viral illness. It is highly contagious, but rarely serious for most children who are not at higher risk. It is a common infection that may be prevented by vaccination.

School health professionals should report respiratory illness outbreaks to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), when 10% of the student population is absent on a given day with respiratory illness symptoms or respiratory illness diagnoses. While childcare settings are not required to report outbreaks, they may also use this link if they would like technical assistance during an outbreak of respiratory illnesses. www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/plan.html

School health and childcare provider information

Cause

SARS-CoV-2 virus, a member of the coronavirus family.

Symptoms

Children may experience a variety of these symptoms: fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headaches, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. Asymptomatic infection is also possible (a child tests positive for COVID-19 but does not have any symptoms).

Children with underlying health conditions are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. There is also some risk of children developing post-COVID conditions ("long COVID"), which includes a wide range of new, returning, or ongoing health problems for four or more weeks after first being infected.

A small number of children may develop a rare, but serious, condition called Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C).

Spread

COVID-19 virus is spread when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or breathes out tiny droplets with COVID-19 virus into the air and another susceptible person breathes them in.

Asymptomatic cases (cases with no symptoms) are also able to spread COVID-19 to others.

Incubation

It takes from 2 to 14 days (median, 5 days) from the time a person is exposed until symptoms begin (or when a person tests positive if an asymptomatic case).

Contagious period

From 2 days before to 10 days after symptoms developed. If asymptomatic, from 2 days before to 10 days after a positive test.

Exclusion

Childcare and school:

- Stay home until symptoms are improving **and** until fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- Note that this time period may be shorter, the same, or longer than previously recommended isolation periods for COVID-19.
- After this time, return to school/childcare and for the next 5 days consider other measures for reducing spread, such as increased hand washing and masking.
- Asymptomatic cases are no longer excluded but are encouraged to consider other measures for reducing spread, such as increased hand washing and masking for 5 days after a positive test.

Diagnosis

Tests are performed on nasopharyngeal (NP), oropharyngeal (OP) (throat), nasal, or saliva specimens. For more about testing, see health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/types.html

Treatment

Recommended parents/guardians call their health care provider. There is no specific treatment for COVID-19 in children with mild symptoms.

Prevention

- Monitor/screen for symptoms; ill staff/children should stay home and seek testing.
- Encourage COVID-19 vaccination for all students and staff. Recommend students/staff stay "up to date" with COVID-19 vaccination and boosters. Vaccinations are recommended for all children ages 6 months and older.
- Face coverings can help prevent the transmission of COVID-19, as well as other viral respiratory illnesses. Recommendations to wear face coverings in school/childcare settings should be consistent with local/state/federal guidelines. Note that face covering recommendations may change based on local activity.
- Close contacts should be tested 6 days after exposure occurred, even if asymptomatic. Anyone exposed should be tested immediately if symptoms develop. Close contacts should consider wearing a mask for 10 days after exposure.
- Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing and sneezing or cough/sneeze into your sleeve. Dispose of used tissues in the trash. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after contact with secretions from the nose or mouth or handling used tissues. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

COVID-19

- Establish a regular schedule and checklist for cleaning and disinfecting commonly touched surfaces (workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, doorknobs, etc.), shared items, shared equipment, and high traffic areas (see Section 2).
- Ventilation is an important factor in preventing COVID-19 transmission indoors. Facility owners and operations should evaluate the operational capacity of ventilation systems and increase and maintain ventilation provided throughout the building.

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