



RETURNING TO SCHOOL DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Information for the School Community



COVID-19 infection has decreased in many Maine communities but it has not disappeared - which means there still is a risk of infection. We care about the health of Maine educators, students and families. This is the best information to help keep you and your family safe during the school year. As this is a new virus, we may need to update this information as we learn more.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- Fever [100.4 F/38 C]
- Headache
- Chills
- New loss of taste or smell
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Difficulty breathing
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fatigue
- Diarrhea
- Body or Muscle aches
- Shortness of Breath

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

How long does it take for symptoms to start?

Once someone has been exposed to coronavirus it can take up to 14 days before symptoms develop. Some people have very mild symptoms, some people become very ill, others develop no symptoms but are still contagious.





What should we do if we have symptoms and we have been tested and are waiting for test results?

- Stay home until the test results are known;
- Isolate from other people and common areas in the house;
- Ideally use a separate bathroom.

What should we do to stay healthy before school starts?

- Keep up routine medical care.
- Make sure your vaccines are current.
- Get a flu shot.
- Make sure any mild underlying illness is in good control.
- If your child traditionally takes medication at school, talk with your provider to see if the medication schedule can be altered so they don't need to take it during the school day.
- Consider limiting your family's high risk exposures while your child is part of the school community such as out-of-state travel, attendance at large group gatherings, close exposures with members other than your close family and/or friends.

How can students and staff prevent themselves from getting COVID-19?

- Review good handwashing techniques.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, even in your home.
- Encourage physical distancing- remain 3-6 feet away from each other. (Adults should maintain 6 feet of distance from students)
- Wear a face covering that shields your mouth and nose- ideally a face mask. Some students may need practice wearing properly.
- If you begin to get symptoms, stay home and monitor them – talk to your provider if they persist or get worse.
- Adults should model mask wearing and physical distancing behaviors for children.



When and why do students and staff need to stay home?

Students and staff should stay home if they have symptoms of COVID-19, if they have been tested for COVID-19 (while awaiting the results), or have been exposed to someone who is sick or tests positive for COVID-19. Staying home when you are sick/ill or if you have been exposed to COVID-19 helps limit the spread of the virus to others. It is possible for those who do not have symptoms to spread the virus to others- this is reduced substantially by wearing a mask.

What is the difference between Casual and Close Contact?

Casual Contact- These are contacts you have very briefly. An example would be someone you pass by in a hallway or store. This contact type is considered low risk.

Close Contact- These are contacts that you spend more than a few seconds with. This contact type increases your risk of getting the COVID-19 infection or spreading it. An example would be someone you are within 6 feet of for more than a few minutes who has or develops COVID-19, OR that you share food and drink with, OR who coughs or sneezes near you when they are infected.

What do isolation/isolate and quarantine mean?

Isolation or Isolate- This means keeping sick people away from healthy people. In a home or residential setting, when one member of the house becomes sick – they need to stay completely away from other household members, should be in their own room with no direct contact, and use their own bathroom when possible.

Quarantine- This means keeping separate and restricting the movement of people who are exposed to the disease from others. They should stay at home – which means no shopping, visiting with others or outside activities. People who have been exposed to COVID-19 can spread the disease before they have symptoms. Quarantining helps decrease the accidental spread of the virus and control outbreaks.





How long must students or staff stay at home if they have been in “Close Contact” with someone who has or develops COVID-19?

They should remain at home for 14 days to see if they develop symptoms.

If there is a ‘close contact’ with someone in your home, can other household members go to work and school?

Yes; The other household members can continue to work or go to school. To protect the household, the person who had ‘Close contact’ should isolate from other household members. If anyone gets sick at home, everyone should stay at home and get tested.

What if we live with someone with Covid-19?

People who live together have ‘close contact’ with each other. All efforts should be made to isolate the sick household member and monitor all others. Household members will need to quarantine for 14 days from the last day of symptoms of their sick housemate, which could be up to 24 days.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>

Where can I find Programs to help provide food?

The Emergency Food Assistance Program- Emergency Free Food

Good Shepherd Food Bank Food Maps- To find a local food pantry.
<https://www.gsfb.org/get-help/food-map/>

SNAP <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ofi/programs-services/food-supplement>





What should happen if someone in my household has COVID-19 and I can't stay completely away from them?

If one or more members of the household are positive for COVID-19, everyone must stay home until the sick person gets better.

- For at least 10 days since the onset of symptoms and
 - Cough and breathing problems are improving and
 - They have not had a fever (100.4 F/38 C) for over 24 hours without any medicine to lower their fever
 - 14 days have passed since the sick person was better to see if anyone else at home gets sick...
 - * (yes this could be a long time)
- *Advice from the federal CDC allows for effective home isolation

What if staff or students are a 'close contact' of someone with COVID-19 and they develop symptoms, but they are unable to get tested. When can they go back?

- Staff/or students can return after:
- At least 10 days have passed since the onset of symptoms and
 - Cough and breathing problems are improving and
 - They have not had a fever (100.4 F/38 C) for over 24 hours without any medicine to lower fever.

How will a student or staff member be informed if they were a close contact of someone with COVID-19 and they will need to quarantine?

The Maine CDC has a system in place to work with the schools to alert staff and families who need to quarantine should an outbreak occur in the schools.

The exposed person should then isolate at home to minimize contact with the rest of the household.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/Contact-Tracing-Infographic-FINAL.pdf?deliveryName=USCDC_1052-DM34417





How long do staff or students need to stay home if they test positive for COVID-19 or a doctor said they likely had COVID-19?

Staff/or students should remain isolated at home:

- For At least 10 days since the onset of symptoms and
- Cough and breathing problems are improving and
- They have not had a fever (100.4 F/38 C) for over 24 hours without any medicine to lower fever.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/Contact-Tracing-Infographic-FINAL.pdf?deliveryName=USCDC_1052-DM34417

Guidelines for those with and without symptoms

What should staff or students do if they have symptoms and they have been tested and are waiting for test results?

They should stay at home and isolate themselves from other members of the household and areas of the house. Ideally staying in their own room and using their own bathroom.

What if staff or students become sick/ill and are not tested for COVID-19 but they have symptoms that suggest they might have COVID-19?

Staff/or students should remain isolated at home:

- For At least 10 days since the onset of symptoms and
- Cough and breathing problems are improving and
- They have not had a fever (100.4 F/38 C) for over 24 hours without any medicine to lower fever.

Public Health Nurses are offering safety net clinics for children and youth who need vaccines at DHHS district offices and community locations. Maine Immunization Program (MIP) has the clinic times/ locations at <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/immunization/index.shtml>





What if staff or students have symptoms of COVID-19 but tests negative?

They should remain home until symptoms are improving and they are fever free for 24 hours without using any fever reducing medication.

*If you are a close contact of someone with COVID-19, have symptoms, and test negative you still must complete 14 days of quarantine. If the illness is getting worse contact your doctor.

**If another diagnosis is identified, such as strep, influenza, RSV etc. they should follow advice for that particular illness and may return after they have not had a fever for 24 hours without using medicine to reduce fever and symptoms are improving.*

3 Key Steps to Take While Waiting for Your COVID-19 Test Result:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/php/318271-A_FS_KeyStepsWhenWaitingForCOVID-19Results_3.pdf?deliveryName=USCDC_1052-DM34417

What are some tips for talking with family members about staying home from school and COVID-19?

- Be aware of your own level of emotion; try to be calm.
- For children, reassure them they are safe and it is okay to be upset.
- Be available to LISTEN and talk to youth of all ages.
- Avoid language that blames and stigmatizes others (makes them feel badly for being sick).
- Pay attention to the how much television, radio, social media is being used by members of the household – some news and social media posts can be disturbing or upsetting
- Provide honest answers that are appropriate for a child’s level of development.
- Help children & teens identify ways to help so they feel useful and empowered

National Association of School Psychologist -Talking to Children about COVID-19:

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/helping-children-cope-with-change>



Other Considerations

What learning opportunities are there for staff and students if they are home and quarantined and otherwise feeling well?

Each school district has been asked to develop remote learning plans and options. You should be in touch with your local school.

What if we do not have Wi Fi - or other technology?

School districts can assist families with resources and learning activities that do not rely on technology.

Are there any resources for housing?

<https://www.mainehousing.org/programs-services/homebuyer/home-loan>

Is there any Rental Relief?

<https://www.mainehousing.org/programs-services/rental/rentaldetail/covid-19-rental-relief-program>

Is there assistance for home heating?

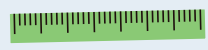
Home Energy Assistance Heating Programs by County
<https://www.mainehousing.org/programs-services/energy/liheap-agency-contacts>
Maine Weatherization Program
<https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/1858>

Are there programs to help staff or students find support for mental health?

Many people are experiencing sadness and anxiety during this pandemic and many are struggling with substance use. It is ok to ask for help. If you or a student is feeling overwhelmed and having thoughts of self-harm or suicide call for help.

Maine Crisis Hotline: 1-888-568-1112
National-Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
Educators/School Staff: Try your Employee Assistance Program





Other Resources for Educators, Staff and Students:

Crisis text line: text HOME to 741741

NAMI Maine Resources:

Teen Text support is available for youth ages 14-20 from noon to 10 pm 207-515-8398

Helpline 1-800-464-5767 (press 1)

LGBTQ Support: Trevor Project LGBTQ Crisis Line: 1-866-488-7386 (online chat here or text TREVOR to 1-202-304-1200)

Trans lifeline 1-877-565-8860

Substance Use Disorder Information: 211 Maine - text your zip code to 898-211 <https://211maine.org/> <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/samhs/osa/>

Support Networks/Organizations: Maine Parent Federation: 1-800-870-7746 <http://mpf.org/>

GEAR Parent Network Crisis Support: 1-800-264-9224 <https://gearparentnetwork.org/get-help/>

Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault: <https://www.mecasa.org/>

Sexual Assault Support Line: 1-800-871-7741

National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

Domestic Violence Hotline: (ME Coalition to end Domestic Violence) 1-866-834-HELP <https://www.mcedv.org/get-help/>

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 or TTY 1-800-787-3224

