



News Release

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Department of Health releases updated COVID-19 guidance for K-12 schools & child care

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has released its updated [COVID-19 guidance for K-12 schools and child care](#). The guidance takes lessons learned from the first two and a half years of the pandemic, and outlines both required and recommended measures for the 2022-23 school year to help reduce COVID-19 transmission in school and child care settings. Schools, child care providers, and families can expect limited changes focused on clarifying and simplifying the guidance.

“We are entering a new stage of coexisting with COVID-19 in our communities, knowing that COVID-19 is here to stay for the foreseeable future,” said Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH, Secretary of Health. “DOH also recognizes the importance of being able to maintain in-person learning for children, and the fundamental links between education and long-term health outcomes.”

Clarified requirements and recommendations in this school year’s guidance include:

- Students, children, and staff who test positive for COVID-19 are required to stay at home and isolate for 5 days. Repeating initial COVID-19 testing will not affect this requirement.
- Students, children, and staff returning from 5 days of isolation should wear a well-fitted mask from days 6 to 10. Those returning are encouraged to test before doing so.
- Schools and child care providers are no longer required to directly notify high risk individuals of exposure but must continue to have a process in place to inform students, staff, and families of cases and outbreaks.
- Schools and child care providers continue to be required to report outbreaks (3 or more cases within a specified core group) to local health jurisdictions (LHJ) and to have a system in place to respond.

DOH continues to encourage schools and child care providers to consider their local context when selecting any additional measures to help reduce COVID-19 transmission in schools and child care settings and to coordinate with their LHJ, particularly during times of outbreak. Schools, child care providers, and the LHJ may choose to continue to implement more protective measures, depending upon their context, to help ensure students, children, and staff can continue in-person activities safely.

While the guidance is specific to COVID-19 prevention, it can also help to reduce transmission of other common respiratory viruses such as influenza. DOH has also developed a [brief for schools](#) and a [brief for child care providers](#) to provide a high-level overview on changes to the guidance.

[COVID-19 vaccinations](#) remain the best protection for everyone against hospitalization and severe disease from COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccine is now [available for children 6 months and older](#). Booster doses are also available for children 5 years and older. DOH encourages all families to vaccinate their children if they are eligible, in consultation with health care providers.

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