**Close Contact**

**Close Contact through** [**Proximity and Duration of Exposure**](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/sars-cov-2-transmission.html)**:** Someone who was within [6 feet of an infected person](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html#stay6ft) (laboratory-confirmed or a [clinically compatible illness](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/clinical-guidance-management-patients.html)) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (for example*, three individual 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes).* An infected person can spread SARS-CoV-2 starting from 2 days before they have any symptoms (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days before the positive specimen collection date), until they meet criteria for [discontinuing home isolation](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/duration-isolation.html).

* **Exception:** In the **K–12 indoor classroom** setting, the close contact definition excludesstudents who were within3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a [clinically compatible illness](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/clinical-guidance-management-patients.html)) if both the infected student and the exposed student(s) [correctly and consistently](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/effective-masks.html) wore well-fitting [masks](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/cloth-face-cover.html) the entire time.

This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.

***Public Health Recommendations:***

Except in certain circumstances, people who have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 should [quarantine](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html). However, the following people with recent exposure may NOT need to quarantine:

* People who have been [fully vaccinated](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html)
* People who were [previously diagnosed with COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html) within the last three months

***Additional Information:***

A number of factors can influence a person’s risk of exposure to COVID-19, including the [type, proximity, and duration of their exposure](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-covid-spreads.html), environmental factors (such as [crowding](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/deciding-to-go-out.html) and ventilation), [vaccination status](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html), [prior COVID-19 infection](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/reinfection.html), and [mask use](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html).

[Correct](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/effective-masks.html) and consistent [mask use](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html) is a critical step that people can take to protect themselves and others from COVID-19. However, the [type of masks used](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/types-of-masks.html) and whether they are used consistently and correctly varies throughout the general population. Except in K–12 indoor classroom settings as described above, mask use is not considered when defining a close contact during case investigation and contact tracing, regardless of whether the person diagnosed with COVID-19 or the person exposed to SARS-CoV-2 was wearing a mask. (Note: Exposure risk in the healthcare setting is determined separately and outlined in CDC [guidance](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html)).

**UPDATE**

Given new evidence on the B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant, CDC has updated the [guidance for fully vaccinated people](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html). CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. Children should return to full-time in-person learning in the fall with layered prevention strategies in place.

**Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools**

Updated Aug. 5, 2021

**Key Takeaways**

* Students benefit from in-person learning, and safely returning to in-person instruction in the fall 2021 is a priority.
* Vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Promoting vaccination can help schools safely return to in-person learning as well as extracurricular activities and sports.
* Due to the circulating and highly contagious Delta variant, CDC recommends universal indoor masking by all students (age 2 and older), staff, teachers, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.
* In addition to universal indoor masking, CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms to reduce transmission risk. When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least 3 feet, such as when schools cannot fully re-open while maintaining these distances, it is especially important to layer multiple other prevention strategies, such as screening testing.
* Screening testing, ventilation, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection are also important layers of prevention to keep schools safe.
* Students, teachers, and staff should stay home when they have signs of any infectious illness and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care.
* Many schools serve children under the age of 12 who are not eligible for vaccination at this time. Therefore, this guidance emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies (e.g., using multiple prevention strategies together consistently) to protect students, teachers, staff, visitors, and other members of their households and support in-person learning.
* Localities should monitor community transmission, vaccination coverage, screening testing, and occurrence of outbreaks to guide decisions on the level of layered prevention strategies (e.g., physical distancing, screening testing).

**Summary of Recent Changes**

* Updated to recommend universal indoor masking for all students, staff, teachers, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.
* Added recommendation for fully vaccinated people who have a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 to be tested 3-5 days after exposure, regardless of whether they have symptoms.