

Mecklenburg County Public Health COVID-19 Testing – Educational Settings



SYMPTOMATIC Students/Staff:

COVID-19 testing is strongly recommended for symptomatic students or staff.

Students/staff who are excluded due to one or more COVID-19 symptoms **MUST** meet one of the following criteria prior to returning to school:

- Documentation of a negative PCR or Antigen test result with symptom improvement and no fever for >24 hours (and no known exposure to someone with COVID-19 within the past 14 days).
OR
- Documentation of an alternative diagnosis by medical provider with symptom improvement and no fever for >24 hours (and no known exposure to someone with COVID-19 within the past 14 days).
OR
- Stay home until at least 10 days have passed since symptom onset, symptoms are better, and no fever for >24 hours.

COVID symptoms requiring exclusion:

- Fever
- Chills
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- New cough
- New loss of taste or smell

Testing should also be considered for new/unexplained:

- Congestion/runny nose
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Vomiting/diarrhea

Interpreting Results for SYMPTOMATIC Students/Staff:

PCR tests:

- **Positive** PCR test: student/staff member must stay home until criteria to end isolation are met.
- **Negative** test: student/staff member may return to school once symptoms have improved and no fever for 24 hours, unless:
 - Instructed to remain home by medical provider (e.g. due to clinical suspicion) OR
 - Needs to complete quarantine period due to exposure to COVID-19.

RT-PCR POC tests include:

- Cepheid Xpert Xpress
- Roche “cobas” SARS-CoV-2/Flu A/Flu B

RAPID ANTIGEN or ABBOT ID NOW tests:

- **Positive** rapid antigen or rapid Abbot ID NOW test:
 - Stay home until the criteria to discontinue isolation are met
- **Negative** rapid antigen or Abbot ID NOW test:
 - This result is considered a *presumptive negative test*. However, the student/staff may return to school if the person has a low likelihood of COVID-19 infection (e.g. the person has no known or suspected exposures to COVID-19 within the last 14 days OR is fully vaccinated OR has had a confirmed COVID-19 infection in the last 90 days)
 - If a follow-up laboratory-based PCR test is performed, the student/staff should stay in isolation until the follow-up PCR is resulted.
 - Negative PCR test: Return to school once symptoms have improved and no fever for 24 hours (and no known exposure to someone with COVID-19 within the past 14 days).
 - Positive PCR test: Stay home until the criteria to discontinue isolation are met.

Rapid antigen tests include:

- Abbott BinaxNOW
- Sofia 2 SARS Antigen FIA (Quidel)
- BD Veritor Plus System antigen test.

Rapid/POC isothermal amplification tests include:

- Abbot ID NOW

ANTIBODY test:

- Antibody tests should NOT be used to diagnose or rule out an active COVID-19 infection.

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Students/Staff With KNOWN CLOSE CONTACT/EXPOSURE TO COVID-19:

COVID-19 testing is **strongly recommended** for students/staff who have had close contact* to an individual with COVID-19.

Students/Staff with known close contact to an individual with COVID-19 have two options for quarantining.

Option 1: Quarantine for 10-14 days since the last date of exposure to the COVID-19 individual prior to returning to school. Those who quarantine for 10 days should be able to adhere to the strict precautions listed below for the entire 14-day period.

- Close contacts who **develop symptoms** should be tested when they develop symptoms. (Repeat testing if previously tested negative).
- **Asymptomatic** close contacts should be tested 5-7 days after last exposure to the COVID-positive individual.
- If student/staff develops symptoms during quarantine and is NOT tested nor receives an alternative diagnosis, the student/staff member must complete the entire quarantine period **AND** be at least 10 days since symptom onset with symptoms improved and no fever for >24 hours.

Option 2: Quarantine for 7 days since the last date of exposure to the COVID-19 individual **AND** remain free of symptoms **AND** have a negative PCR or antigen test no earlier than day 5 after last contact with the person who tested positive **AND** can adhere to the following **strict precautions** for the entire 14 day period :

- Monitoring closely for symptoms and isolate immediately if any symptoms develop
- Wearing a face covering correctly and consistently
- Practicing social distancing

Note: Fully vaccinated close contacts do not need to quarantine if asymptomatic; testing is recommended for close contacts who are fully vaccinated 3-5 days after exposure, even if there are no symptoms. Masking indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until your test result is negative is also recommended for fully vaccinated individuals. Those who have had COVID-19 in the last 90 days do not need to quarantine as long as they are free of symptoms.

Interpreting Test Results for Students/Staff Who Are CLOSE CONTACTS:

PCR OR RAPID ANTIGEN OR ABBOT ID NOW test:

- **Positive** test: student/staff member is considered a positive case and must stay home until criteria to discontinue isolation are met.
- **Negative** test: Students/staff who are not fully vaccinated must still quarantine using one of the two options listed in the section above.
 - If student/staff member has on-going exposure to the COVID-positive individual, the quarantine timeframe doesn't start until the COVID-positive individual is released from isolation.

* A close contact is defined as someone who has been within 6 feet of a person currently infected the virus for at least 15 minutes over a 24-hour period beginning 2 days before the person became sick (or two days before the date of the COVID test date if the person doesn't have symptoms). Exemption: Students who were masked appropriately and consistently AND other prevention strategies were in place. This does NOT apply to teachers, staff or other adults. This does NOT apply to exposures during extracurricular/athletic activities.

CONTACTING MECKLENBURG COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

Testing Guidance, Clinical
Questions, Reporting Results

MCPH Communicable Disease Program
980-314-9400 Option 3

Specific Child Care/Pre-K/K-12
Related Questions

MCPH Communicable Disease Program
Contact the COVID School Team:
covidsschoolteam@mecklenburgcountync.gov

General COVID-19 Questions

MCPH COVID-19 Hotline
980-314-9400 Option 3

