

What families should know for safe return to in-person school



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Know how to communicate with your school

- Do you know how to contact the school nurse?
- Does the school have the best phone number to reach you during the day?

Know how to screen for symptoms of COVID-19

Screen your child for symptoms every day before going to school.

Students must stay home if feeling unwell. Everyone must do their part to protect others and not come to school if they are exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms.

If your child has any of the symptoms below, they must get a test for COVID-19 before returning to school. The alternative is to remain at home in self-isolation for 14 days from symptom onset.

- Fever (100.0° F or higher), chills, or shaking chills
- Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Headache, when in combination with other symptoms
- Muscle aches or body aches
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Fatigue, when in combination with other symptoms
- Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) when in combination with other symptoms

If you are notified that your child was a close contact of a COVID-19 case, your child must get a test for COVID-19 and self-quarantine for 14 days after the last exposure to the person who tested positive, regardless of your child's test result.

A close contact is defined as being within six feet of the individual for at least 15 minutes, while the person was infectious.

Know your test site

Make a plan for where you will take your child to get tested. Boston Children's offers a [locator to find test sites that accommodate children](#) and the [State of Massachusetts has further resources](#). It is also a good idea to contact your child's primary care physician for further instructions.

Know what to do when you get your child's COVID-19 test results

Call the school nurse (or your school's designated COVID response leader) to discuss your child's test results as soon as you receive them, whether they are positive or negative. The nurse will provide further instructions.

For a positive test result, expect to do the following:

- Remain at home at least 10 days and until symptoms have improved and child has had no fever for at least 24 hours.
- Answer the call from the contact tracing team (local board of health or Community Tracing Collaborative) and help identify/notify close contacts to help prevent transmission. The contact tracing team will ultimately clear your child for return to school.

For a negative test result, return to school will depend on having improved symptoms and having no fever for at least 24 hours without any fever-reducing medications. Check with the school nurse before returning to school.

Know the three critical measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in school

Wearing masks

If your child is in second grade or above (some districts will require masks for all ages), they will be required to wear a mask that adequately covers both their nose and mouth at all times, except for designated breaks, which will occur throughout the day.

Students in pre-K and first grade should wear masks whenever possible. Exceptions will be made for students with medical, behavioral, or other challenges who are unable to wear masks/face coverings.

You should provide your child with a mask to wear on the way to school and during the school day (consider also providing a backup mask in case the mask breaks or gets dirty). Cloth masks should be washed daily.

A [downloadable education sheet](#) with tips to help your child get used to wearing a mask is available from Boston Children's.

Hand hygiene

Your child will be required to perform hand hygiene (handwashing or sanitizing) upon arrival to school, before eating, before putting on and taking off masks, and before dismissal. Please help your child learn to wash hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer for 20 seconds at a time.

Physical distance

As COVID-19 is transmitted through respiratory droplets, distance between individuals reduces risk. In classroom settings, six feet of separation is recommended when feasible (some districts may require six feet at all times). When six feet is not feasible, a minimum of three feet of distance is acceptable as long as everyone is wearing a mask.

Your school will likely assign seats or designate cohorts of students to help mitigate the transmission of the virus. Please encourage your child to follow these instructions.

What do I do if I have additional questions?

Contact your school nurse, or email COVID19K12ParentInfo@mass.gov