



Guidance in NC

When to Send Children Back to School After Having COVID-19 or Being Exposed

NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL GUIDANCE

These are general guidelines. There may be some differences between counties as well as public vs. independent schools within counties. And, some school districts may require new forms to be filled out. **Please refer to your child's school for guidance.** For more information, view this guide from the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS): https://files.nc.gov/covid/PHT-ScreeningReferenceGuide_6.30.pdf

TESTING

PCR/molecular tests are the most accurate tests currently available to diagnose COVID-19. Because PCR tests are typically processed in a lab, it can take several days for patients to get their results.

Although rapid point-of-care tests deliver fast results, they are not as accurate, and false negative results are possible.

Note: NC schools do not recognize rapid, point-of-care COVID-19 testing for school-aged children with symptoms.

Find a Testing Location

NCDHHS describes several different ways to [access COVID-19 testing](#), including no-cost options. You can also contact your child's primary care provider or visit any [Atrium Health Urgent Care location](#) for testing.

COVID-19 Screening Flow Chart

- No Flags | Proceed to school**
- Exposure,* No Symptoms | Cannot go to school today**
 - Home for 14 days since exposure; or 10 days if no symptoms have been reported during daily monitoring; or 7 days if no symptoms have been reported during daily monitoring and the individual has received results of a negative PCR/molecular test on a test taken no earlier than day 5 of quarantine.
- Diagnosis, No Symptoms | Cannot go to school today**
 - Home for 10 days since first positive COVID-19 test
- At Least 1 Symptom** | Cannot go to school today**
(Fever, chills, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, new cough, new loss of taste or smell)
 - If confirmed positive COVID-19 OR person has not been tested: Home for 10 days since first symptoms, no fever for 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medicine), AND symptom improvement, including coughing and shortness of breath.
 - If negative rapid test: Home until follow-up negative PCR/molecular test, no fever for 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medicine), AND they have felt well for 24 hours.
 - If negative PCR/molecular COVID-19 test: Home until no fever for 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medicine), AND they have felt well for 24 hours.
 - If confirmed diagnosis other than COVID-19 (e.g., stomach virus, ear infection): Follow typical school illness policies to determine when person can return.

For step-by-step instructions for school personnel, review the [Reference Guide for Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 \(K-12\)](#)

*Exposure refers to being within 6 feet of someone diagnosed with COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more within a 24-hour period.

**The more narrow set of COVID-19 symptoms listed here reflects required exclusionary symptoms in order to avoid over-exclusion of people from school facilities.