



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT COVID-19 IN A SCHOOL SETTING

This document is intended to help parents and school staff gain a general understanding of what to expect if a student or staff person experiences symptoms of COVID-19, has an exposure to COVID-19, or tests positive for COVID-19. There can be some variability in these situations based on the specific circumstances and school strategies used to reduce the spread of illness. **Please contact the Teton County Health Department at 406-466-2562 if you have any questions!**

<b>SYMPTOMS</b>	<p><b>What are the symptoms of COVID-19?</b></p> <p>People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. The symptoms include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever (100.4° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills</li> <li>• Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)</li> <li>• Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath</li> <li>• New loss of taste or smell</li> <li>• Sore throat</li> <li>• Headache, <i>when in combination with other symptoms</i></li> <li>• Muscle aches or body aches</li> <li>• Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea</li> <li>• Fatigue, <i>when in combination with other symptoms</i></li> <li>• Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) <i>when in combination with other symptoms</i></li> </ul>
	<p><b>What happens if a student or school staff member has symptoms of COVID-19?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay home from work or school.</li> <li>• If at the school, the student will be placed in a designated waiting room and go home as soon as possible.</li> <li>• Get evaluated by a healthcare provider, <b>get tested for active COVID-19 infection</b>, and stay home until the test result returns negative.</li> <li>• Contact the Teton County Health Department at 466-2562 if you or your child is tested.</li> </ul>
<b>TESTING</b>	<p><b>Who should get tested for COVID-19?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People who have COVID-19 symptoms.</li> <li>• People who have been exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Where can my child get tested for COVID-19?</b></p> <p>There is testing available in Choteau, Fairfield, and Great Falls. If your child is symptomatic, they should be evaluated by a healthcare provider to help you determine if they should be tested for COVID-19. Please call your healthcare provider first, and let them know your child is experiencing signs and symptoms of COVID-19, so they can take appropriate precautions to protect themselves and other patients. If you do not have a health care provider, you can contact the Teton County Health Department for assistance to find testing at 406-466-2562.</p>
	<p><b>Will testing be offered at the school?</b></p> <p>Currently, surveillance testing (testing of asymptomatic individuals who do not have known exposures to COVID-19) is not recommended in a school setting in Montana. Testing should be done through a healthcare provider. If a significant number of exposures occur within a school setting, the school administration will work with the Teton County Health Department to determine if testing within the school is appropriate. No student will be tested without parental consent.</p>

	<p><b>What if my child is symptomatic but I cannot get them tested?</b>  Testing for COVID-19 is a very important component of reducing the spread of disease in our community. If you are struggling to get your child tested, contact the Teton County Health Department for assistance. In many locations, testing is done at NO COST to the patient.</p> <p><b>What if my child tests positive?</b>  Keep your child home. Notify the school of the results. The Teton County Health Department will be contacting you to give you further guidance on how to protect your family and others, look into where your child may have been exposed to the virus, and to help determine who your child has been in close contact with. Many people experience relatively mild illness and will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days and until at least 24 hours have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms. The Teton County Health Department will help you determine when it is safe for your child to return to school.</p> <p><b>How long does it take to get test results?</b>  Typically, it takes 2-7 days to get test results, but this can be variable, based on the current capacity of the Montana State Public Health Lab. Priority testing is given to individuals with symptoms of COVID-19 and those who have been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19.</p>
<b>EXPOSURE</b>	<p><b>My child was in close contact with another person who tested positive for COVID-19. What should I do?</b>  If the child is home when you learn of their exposure, they should be kept at home. Contact the Teton County Health Department and inform them of the situation. They will help you determine if your child was exposed during the contagious period and help you get your child tested, if necessary.</p> <p><b>How long will my child need to stay home after an exposure to COVID-19?</b>  Your child will need to stay home for 14 days from their most recent exposure, even if they are asymptomatic. If your child was exposed at the school, the Teton County Health Department will work with the school’s administration to determine when children who have been exposed to COVID-19 can safely return to school.</p> <p><b>If a student at the school tests positive, will their whole class be quarantined?</b>  It depends. The Teton County Health Department will work with the school administration to determine if the positive student was on school grounds during the contagious period (48 hours prior to the onset of symptoms or testing, if they were asymptomatic.) From there, individual contacts will be evaluated to determine if there was an exposure. An individual is considered exposed to the virus if they are within 6ft of the infectious individual for 15 minutes (cumulative) or more.  Here are a couple of examples to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EXPOSURE:</b> An elementary student is in class with a positive classmate for 2 days during the infectious period. Their desks are not next to each other, but the students move around the classroom frequently, work in partners, and play together at recess.</li> <li>• <b>NOT AN EXPOSURE:</b> A high school student is in class with a positive classmate for 2 days during the infectious period, but both parties always sit at the same desks, which are more than 6 ft apart from each other. They were in their desks for the whole class period, and did not have any interactions outside of that class, besides briefly passing each other when exiting the room.</li> </ul> <p>In some circumstances, a whole classroom may be asked to stay home/move to a distance learning model during the quarantine period.</p> <p><b>If one of my children is exposed to COVID-19, will my other children also need to be tested and quarantined?</b>  No. If one of your children is considered a close contact to a confirmed COVID-19 case, that child should be tested and kept home for 14 days from the date of their most recent exposure. Your child that had an exposure should be kept away from other household members as much as possible during that time. Other children in your household would be considered a “contact of a contact.” They do not need to be tested unless they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, and they can continue to go to school. If your student that had the exposure tests positive, then other household members would be tested and quarantined.</p>

<b>SCHOOL CLOSURES</b>	<p><b>Will the school close if multiple students and/or staff test positive for COVID-19?</b></p> <p>If there is more than one confirmed COVID-19 case in the school at one time, or if there is a series of cases in a short span of time, school administration will work with the Teton County Health Department to determine if it is likely that there is transmission happening in the school. When there is in-school transmission, it may be necessary for school officials to close part of the school or the entire school for a few days for extensive cleaning – likely one to three days. Complying with other interventions, including cohorting, testing, isolation, and quarantine, will help to manage any outbreaks in the school and drastically reduce the likelihood that the entire school will need to be closed.</p> <p>Other factors that may impact school closures include transmission of COVID-19 in the community and new directives from the Governor’s Office.</p>
<b>PREVENTION</b>	<p><b>What can my family do outside of school to help prevent COVID-19 transmission in the school?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch your children for any signs of COVID-19 illness, and keep them home if they are sick, even mildly.</li> <li>• Avoid people who are sick (coughing and sneezing).</li> <li>• Put distance between your children and other people outside your home. Keep children at least 6 feet from other people whenever possible.</li> <li>• Limit the number of people your children and family come in close contact with outside of school.</li> <li>• Wear a mask if physical distancing is not possible.</li> <li>• Teach children good handwashing, and be a good role model by washing your hands often. This is especially important after you have been in a public place.</li> <li>• Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces daily in household common areas, like tables, chairs, doorknobs, light switches, remotes, handles, toilets, and sinks.</li> <li>• Launder items including washable plush toys as needed. Dirty laundry from an ill person can be washed with other people’s items.</li> <li>• Consider changing travel plans.</li> </ul>
<b>DEFINITIONS</b>	<p><b>Close Contact</b> – <i>a person who was exposed to a communicable disease. For COVID-19, this is someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 48 hours before illness onset until the time the patient is isolated.</i></p> <p><b>Cohorting</b> – <i>forming groups of students, and sometimes teachers or staff, that stay together throughout the school day to minimize exposure of other students, teachers, and staff across the school environment.</i></p> <p><b>Contact Tracing</b> – <i>the process used by public health professionals to identify, notify, and monitor individuals who have been exposed to a communicable disease.</i></p> <p><b>Contagious Period</b> – <i>the period of time when a disease can be spread to others. For COVID-19, people are contagious starting 48 hours prior to onset of symptoms or testing positive if they have no symptoms, and while they have symptoms.</i></p> <p><b>Exposure</b> – <i>having come into contact with an agent (e.g., bacteria, viruses) that causes a particular health problem. For COVID-19, this is having come within 6ft of a person infected with the virus for 15 minutes or longer, during their contagious period.</i></p> <p><b>Isolation</b> – <i>separating sick people from healthy people. This means staying home and away from others in the household as much as possible.</i></p> <p><b>Quarantine</b> – <i>the separation of individuals who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. Quarantine is for people who are not showing symptoms of illness. This means staying home and away from others in the household as much as possible.</i></p> <p><b>Transmission</b> – <i>the way viruses and bacteria spread from one infected person to another person and causes them to become infected.</i></p>