

# Returning to School After COVID-19

## INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

COVID-19 is still spreading in Wisconsin communities—which means it is still a threat to your health. We care about you and your family's health. So while the virus is still new, we worked with our state, local, and federal partners to give you the best information we have.

### What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- Fever (at least 100.4°F)
- Chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

As we learn more about the symptoms of COVID-19, we continue to update the list. For the most up-to-date list of symptoms, visit [www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/symptoms.htm](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/symptoms.htm).

### What steps can I take to prevent my student from getting COVID-19?

You can talk with your student about taking everyday steps to prevent getting sick:

- Help them wash their hands often.
- Help them avoid close contact with people who are sick, even inside your own home.
- Remind them to stay 6 feet apart from other people.
- Cover their mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when they are around others, if they are able to do so safely.
- Teach your students to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily.
- Help your student monitor their health—look for symptoms and take their temperature daily.

For more detailed information about protecting your student from COVID-19 visit: [www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/protect.htm](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/protect.htm).

### How long does it take for symptoms to start?

It can take up to 14 days for people with COVID-19 to start showing symptoms. Some people have very mild symptoms, some people become really sick, and some people with COVID-19 don't have any symptoms at all.

## Why does my student need to stay home?

Your student should stay home if they have symptoms of COVID-19, have been tested for COVID-19 (while waiting for results), or have been exposed to someone who tests positive for COVID-19.

Keeping ill students, and students who have been exposed to COVID, away from others, we can stop the spread of the virus. It is possible for people who do not have symptoms to spread the virus to others.

To help schools track any potential outbreaks, families and caregivers should notify their student's school if they are staying home from school because they are sick with symptoms of COVID-19 or if they have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, and describe their symptoms if they have any.

## What does isolation and quarantine mean?

These are terms that public health scientists use to describe why someone needs to stay home. They are public safety tools that have been around for centuries to stop the spread of germs.

**Isolation** means keeping sick people away from healthy ones. This usually means that the sick person rests in their own bedroom or area of your home and keeps away from others as best as possible.

**Quarantine** means separating people who were exposed to a sick person away from others. Because someone can spread COVID-19 before they have symptoms, quarantine stops them from accidentally spreading the virus to other healthy people. Usually people who are in quarantine stay at home and avoid being around others.

## How do I know if my student was around someone who was sick?

Your local public health department has a system to tell whether someone should stay at home. Local public health staff will call you if your student falls into that group.

## How long does my student need to stay home if they tested positive OR a doctor said they likely have COVID-19?

If your student has symptoms they should stay at home and away from others as much as possible until all three of the following have happened:

1. At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms started and;
2. They haven't had a fever (100.4°F or greater) in at least 24 hours without using any medication to lower fever and;
3. Their cough or breathing problems get better.
4. Students do not need a negative test before returning to school.

## What if my student tested positive for COVID-19, but doesn't show symptoms?

They should stay home 10 days after the day they were tested and keep away from other people as much as possible. This is because even if they don't have symptoms, they can still spread the virus. Students do not need a negative test before returning to school.

## What if my student becomes sick but isn't tested for COVID-19?

They should stay home, in isolation, until they are feeling better and all the following have happened:

1. At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms started and;
2. They haven't had a fever (100.4°F or greater) in at least 24 hours without using any medication to lower fever and;
3. Their cough or breathing problems get better.
4. Students do not need a negative test before returning to school.

## What if my student becomes sick but tests negative for COVID-19?

They should stay home until they are feeling better and they have not had a fever for 24 hours without using any medication to reduce fever.

If they visit a doctor and they tell you your student has something other than COVID-19 (like the flu or hand, foot, and mouth) then you should follow the doctor's guidelines for exclusion requirements for that disease. Review the **Wisconsin Childhood Communicable Diseases Wall Chart, P-44397** for additional information.

## What is a "Close Contact"?

**Close contact** with someone with COVID-19 makes you at higher risk for getting sick or spreading COVID-19. Examples of close contact are being within 6 feet of someone with COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes, sharing a drinking glass or eating utensil, physically touching the person or things that may have their germs on them like dirty tissues, or being coughed or sneezed on.

**Casual contact** like passing someone in the grocery store is low risk for spreading COVID-19.



## What if my student came in “close contact” with someone who has COVID-19?

They should stay home for 14 days since the last time they were around that person to see if they develop symptoms. If they do get symptoms, then:

1. Call their health care provider—if you don't have one, contact 211 to be connected to resources that can help you with this. Ask to get tested—or look for a **community testing site in your area**. Follow instructions on how to best prevent the spread of illness and keep yourself, your loved ones, and your community safe. Many clinics in Wisconsin provide services for people with little or no insurance:
  - **Wisconsin Association of Free & Charitable Clinics**
  - **Federally Qualified Health Centers** are community-based organizations that provide comprehensive primary care and preventive care, regardless of their ability to pay.
  - **Rural health centers**
  - **Tribal health centers**
2. Ask to get tested.
3. Follow their instructions for staying home while you wait for the test results.

Note that receiving a negative test will not result in an earlier release from quarantine.

## If there are other children in our home, who do not have symptoms should they stay home, too, or continue coming to school?

No, your other students may continue to go to work and school. If the child who was in close contact gets sick, then your other students should stay home.

## What if we live with someone who has COVID-19?

People who live together usually have close contact with each other. Everyone you live with should stay home until the all of following have happened:

1. The sick person gets better:
  - a. At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms started and;
  - b. They haven't had a fever (100.4°F or greater) in at least 24 hours without using any medication to lower fever and;
  - c. Their cough or breathing problems get better.
2. **PLUS** 14 days have passed since the sick person was better to see if other people in your home get symptoms.

## What if my student that had “close contact” with someone with COVID-19 and gets sick but isn’t tested COVID-19?

Your student should stay home and away from others as much as possible until they get better and all the following have happened:

1. At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms started and;
2. They haven’t had a fever (100.4°F or greater) in at least 24 hours without using any medication to lower fever and;
3. Their cough or breathing problems get better.
4. **PLUS** 14 days have passed since they were last around the person with COVID-19.

## What if my student that had "close contact" with someone with COVID-19 but tests negative for COVID-19?

If they visit a doctor and they tell you your student has something other than COVID-19 (like the flu or hand, foot, and mouth) then you should follow the doctor’s guidelines for exclusion requirements for that disease. Review the **Wisconsin Childhood Communicable Diseases Wall Chart, P-44397** for additional information.

If they don't visit a doctor and have proof of another disease, they must stay home until all of the following have happened:

1. They have been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.
2. Their symptoms (for example, cough or breathing problems) are better.
3. At least 14 days have passed since they were around the person with COVID-19.

## How do I talk with my student about staying home from school and COVID-19?

Here are some tips for talking with children:

- Remain calm while talking.
- Let them know they are safe and it is okay to feel upset.
- Make yourself available to listen and to talk.
- Avoid language that might blame or stigmatize others.
- Pay attention to what children see or hear on the media.
- Provide truthful and developmental appropriate information.
- Talk about new actions that may be taken at school to help protect your students and staff.

Visit the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** and **Department of Public Instruction** for even more tips on taking with your children about COVID-19.

## What learning opportunities are there for my student while they are staying home?

Schools are expected to have a plan in place to offer alternative or distance learning for children who need to be absent from school due to illness or potential exposure. The expectations of participation in alternative learning for students who are sick compared to asymptomatic students who have been sent home due to potential exposure will be clarified.

## What if we don't have Wi-Fi or technology?

For families that don't have access to Wi-Fi or other technology, schools will offer distance learning that does not rely on Internet or technology.

## What do I do if I can't take 14 days off to stay home with my student?

There are some communities in Wisconsin that offer local support. You can try calling 211. You can also visit the **Resilient Wisconsin** program website for support for food, mental health, housing and other resources.

## If all of my children need to stay home, how will all of them have access to learning opportunities while home?

Your school will work with you to offer distance learning materials appropriate for your children.

## What if I am a health care provider and work with COVID-positive patients—what should my student do?

Your student may continue to attend school unless they develop symptoms. If they develop symptoms, keep them home and call their doctor.

## If my student stays home, I am working from home and I can't help with schoolwork as I will be busy working—what should I do?

Your school will work with you to support your student's distance learning.

## Where can I find programs that help provide food?

- The **FoodShare Wisconsin** program has resources to support people of all ages to stop hunger and improve nutrition.
- You can also call **211** to learn about congregate meal programs or food pantries in your area.



## Where can I find support around mental or behavioral health?

- Check-out the **Resilient Wisconsin** website. There are many resources available for people who are looking for mental or behavioral health support.
- You can also take a look at **BadgerCare** which is a health care coverage program for low-income Wisconsin residents.

## Where can I find resources around rental assistance or housing assistance?

You can contact your local **Community Action Program Association** to learn how to apply for rental assistance.

## Where can I find resources to assist with employment support?

The **Resilient Wisconsin** website has resources for coping tips for disrupted workers and families. The Department of Workforce Development has posted **frequently asked questions** about COVID-19 and Wisconsin Unemployment.

## Where can I find information about crisis support?

It's okay to ask for help. If sadness or anxiety is overwhelming your ability to cope, you are having thoughts of self-harm or suicide, or you face difficult or dangerous circumstances and need help, call 911 or reach out for crisis support right away.

### General Resources

211wisconsin is a free, confidential service that connects you with food and nutrition programs, housing and utilities assistance, mental health and harmful substance use services, financial and employment assistance.

- **Call:** 211 or 877-947-2211
- **Text:** TextWithUs to 66746

### Domestic and Sexual Violence Resources

**National Domestic Violence Hotline**  
1-800-799-7233 or TTY 1-800-787-3224  
[thehotline.org](http://thehotline.org)

**Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Abuse**  
[wcasa.org/survivors/service-providers](http://wcasa.org/survivors/service-providers)

**DOJ Victim Services**  
[doj.state.wi.us/ocvs/find-local-crime-victim-resources](http://doj.state.wi.us/ocvs/find-local-crime-victim-resources)

**End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin**  
[endabusewi.org/get-help](http://endabusewi.org/get-help)

**National Sexual Assault Hotline**  
1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

## Mental Health Resources

### **Mental & Behavioral Health Crisis Support HOPELINE**

Available 24/7

**Text:** HOPELINE to 741741

### **NAMI Helpline**

**Call:** 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

### **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

Speak with a counselor

**Call:** 1-800-273-8255

### **Trans Lifeline**

Available 24/7

**Call:** 877-565-8860

### **Trevor Project**

Available 24/7

**Call:** 866-488-7386

**Text:** START to 678678

### **Veterans Crisis Line**

Available 24/7

**Call:** 1-800-273-8255, press 1

1-800-799-4889 (for the deaf and hard of hearing)

**Text:** 838255

## Substance Abuse Resources

Wisconsin Addiction Recovery Helpline, available 24/7

• **Call:** 211 or 833-944-4673    • **Text:** Your zip code to 898211