COVID-19 Decision Trees for K-12 Schools
October 5, 2021

If the person...

- Has symptoms, use the **Symptom and Isolation Tree**
- Has tested positive and does not have symptoms, use the **Asymptomatic Positive Tree**
- Is identified as a close contact and does not have symptoms, use the **Close Contact and Quarantine Tree**

**Symptom and Isolation Tree**

A person has one or more symptoms associated with COVID-19
Possible symptoms include fever, 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, and/or diarrhea.

- **Is the person fully vaccinated?**
  - **YES**
    - Stay home until symptoms have improved according to existing school policy, typically 24 hours without fever and no use of fever-reducing medicine
  - **NO**
    - When symptoms have improved and 24 hours have passed without fever or the use of fever-reducing medication, return is authorized using the quarantine options on Page 2

- **What type of test was used?**
  - **MOLECULAR**
    - **YES**
      - Result from a COVID test taken after onset of symptoms?
        - **POSITIVE** or not done.
          - Isolate the person pending a final determination as required below
        - **NEGATIVE**
          - When symptoms have improved and 24 hours have passed without fever or the use of fever-reducing medicine, return is authorized using the quarantine options on Page 2
  - **ANTIGEN**
    - **YES**
      - What was the follow-up molecular test sample (collected within 48 hours) negative?
        - **NO** It was positive, not done, or not done within 48 hours.
          - **YES**
            - Return on or after Day 11 from onset of symptoms if symptoms have improved + 24 hours without fever and no use of fever-reducing medications
            - Stay home until symptoms have improved according to existing school policy, typically 24 hours without fever and no use of fever-reducing medication
    - **NEGATIVE**
      - **YES**
        - Is there a documented pre-existing chronic condition that accounts for the symptoms?
    - **NO**
      - Allow return to school or work

**Asymptomatic Positive Tree**

A person has tested **positive for COVID-19 and does not have symptoms**

- **Was the positive result from an antigen or molecular test?**
  - **ANTIGEN**
    - **YES**
      - Was the person identified as a close contact in the last 14 days?
        - **YES**
          - Use the Close Contact and Quarantine Tree
        - **NO**
          - Return to school or work
    - **NO**
      - Was a follow-up molecular test sample (collected within 48 hours) negative?
        - **NO** The test was positive, not done, or not done within 48 hours.
          - Isolate for 10 days from the date on which the first sample was collected.
            - Additional tests should not be performed.
            - If symptoms develop, continue isolation for 10 days past the onset of symptoms. Return on or after Day 11 if symptoms have improved +24 hours without fever and no use of fever-reducing medications.
        - **YES**
          - Isolate the person pending a final determination as described below

- **MOLECULAR (PCR, LAMP or NAAT)**
  - **YES**
    - Was the positive result from a molecular test sample collected after onset of symptoms?
      - **POSITIVE** or not done.
        - Isolate the person pending a final determination as described below
      - **NEGATIVE**
        - It was positive, not done, or not done within 48 hours.
          - Use the Close Contact and Quarantine Tree
  - **NEGATIVE**
    - Use the Close Contact and Quarantine Tree

Stay home until symptoms have improved according to existing school policy, typically 24 hours without fever and no use of fever-reducing medicine

When symptoms have improved and 24 hours have passed without fever or the use of fever-reducing medicine, return is authorized using the quarantine options on Page 2

Return on or after Day 11 from onset of symptoms if symptoms have improved + 24 hours without fever and no use of fever-reducing medications

Stay home until symptoms have improved according to existing school policy, typically 24 hours without fever and no use of fever-reducing medication

Allow return to school or work
Close Contact and Quarantine Tree

A person who is not fully vaccinated or within 90-day of a lab confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, has been identified as having been in close contact with a person who is known to have COVID-19.

- **Modified (in-school) Quarantine**: This option may only be used by student close contacts exposed in a setting supervised by school staff, when the COVID-19-positive person and student close contact were both wearing masks during all contacts with each other within 6 feet, indoors and outside. To remain in school the student must test 2x/week with a test administered ASAP (within 24 hours of notification) and on day 5, 6 or 7. Rapid result (antigen) testing is recommended. The student must also quarantine at home from all before-school, after-school, and weekend activities. Activities may resume on or after Day 8 with evidence of a negative test sample collected on or after Day 5.

- **Return on Day 8**: Allows a student or employee close contact to return on Day 8 with evidence that a diagnostic specimen collected on or after Day 5 is negative.

- **Return on Day 11**: Allows a student or employee to return on Day 11. Testing is recommended on Day 3, 4 or 5, but not required.

If the person cannot or will not follow the requirements listed below, quarantine for 14 days (return Day 15) is required.

**Quarantine Requirements**

- **Modified (in-school) Quarantine**: This option may only be used by student close contacts exposed in a setting supervised by school staff, when the COVID-19-positive person and student close contact were both wearing masks during all contacts with each other within 6 feet, indoors and outside. To remain in school the student must test 2x/week with a test administered ASAP (within 24 hours of notification) and on day 5, 6 or 7. Rapid result (antigen) testing is recommended. The student must also quarantine at home from all before-school, after-school, and weekend activities. Activities may resume on or after Day 8 with evidence of a negative test sample collected on or after Day 5.

- **Return on Day 8**: Allows a student or employee close contact to return on Day 8 with evidence that a diagnostic specimen collected on or after Day 5 is negative.

- **Return on Day 11**: Allows a student or employee to return on Day 11. Testing is recommended on Day 3, 4 or 5, but not required.

- **If symptoms develop or a positive test result occurs** during quarantine, require isolation at home and consult the Symptom and Isolation or Asymptomatic Positive tree.

**Additional Requirements for Return Before Day 15**

- Students and employees must agree to self-monitor for symptoms, wear a face covering over their nose and mouth as required, use good hand hygiene practices, and use good cough and sneeze etiquette.

- Employees must also maintain physical distancing of 6 feet at all times. If these requirements cannot or will not be met, 14-day quarantine is required.

- Accommodations (like changes in the close contact’s work, room, seat, or bus assignments) should be made to ensure that close contacts returning before Day 15 will not be near others with severe immunosuppressive disorder (e.g., bone marrow or solid organ transplant, chemotherapy). If these accommodations cannot be made the close contact must quarantine for 14 days.

**Other Notes on Quarantine**

- The number of days required for quarantine is counted from the day after the person’s last close contact with a person who is contagious with COVID-19. Please see the Frequently Asked Question 1, on page 3, under “isolation” for information on how long people are considered to be contagious.
1. What is the difference between quarantine and isolation?

**Quarantine:** People who have been identified as having been in close contact with someone with COVID-19 are required to quarantine away from others because they may become infected with COVID-19 from 2 to 14 days following their last contact with a person who has COVID-19.

**Isolation:** People who have one or more of the symptoms associated with COVID-19 are required to isolate away from others while they may be contagious with COVID-19. A person:

- With symptoms is considered to be contagious from 2 days before their symptoms began, to 10 days after.
- Who has tested positive and does not have symptoms is considered contagious from 2 days before the date their first positive test sample was collected until 10 days after, if they remain asymptomatic.
- Who tested positive while they were asymptomatic, and develops symptoms later, is considered contagious from 2 days before the first positive test sample was collected until 10 days after their symptoms began.

2. Who is exempt from quarantine requirements?

Close contacts who do not have symptoms are not required to quarantine if they provide evidence that they:

- Are fully vaccinated (at least 14 days past their second dose of Pfizer or Moderna, or single dose of J&J) OR
- Have recovered from a lab confirmed case of COVID-19 and it has been 90 days or less since the onset of symptoms.

If symptoms do occur, even people who are fully vaccinated, and those who have already had COVID-19 are required to self-isolate immediately and contact their health care provider or San Diego County Public Health Services.
3. **What are the requirements for quarantine when a member of a household has COVID-19?**

K-12 workers and students identified as having been in close contact with a person who has COVID-19 are required to quarantine between 7 and 14 days (depending on the option that is available) from the date of their last contact with a person who is contagious. (People are considered to be contagious from 2 days before their symptoms began, or if they remain asymptomatic, the date on which their first positive test sample was collected) to 10 days after.) When a member of a household has COVID-19, all members of the household who are not otherwise exempt from quarantine are required to quarantine at home while the COVID-positive household member is contagious, plus the number of days required for the quarantine option that they’re authorized to use. If another member(s) of the household develops COVID-19 during the quarantine period, quarantine for all members of the household who are not exempt must be extended based on the new exposure.

4. **Can a COVID-19-positive household member isolate themselves in a room in their home to reduce the overall length of quarantine others who live in the home?**

If the COVID-19-positive person is not able to isolate in a separate residence, the county’s home isolation instructions (translations) describe the specific requirements for isolation in a home occupied by others. If the person is able to comply with these instructions, quarantine of close contacts can begin when the COVID-19-positive person begins isolation.

5. **Why are some of the CDC’s recommendations not included in the decision tree?**

While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) makes recommendations, the requirements for California schools are established by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). The decision tree is based on requirements expressed in the CDPH K-12 guidance and related FAQ, K-12 Testing Strategies, Cal/OSHA Emergency Temporary Standards, the local public health orders, pertinent executive orders, and answers received directly from the CDPH.

6. **Are schools required to make modified (in school) quarantine available for their students who meet the criteria for it?**

Item 8 of the CDPH school guidance characterizes modified quarantine as a “recommendation for unvaccinated students for exposures when both parties were wearing a mask, as required in K-12 indoor settings.” Schools are not required to utilize this option.

7. **What are the requirements if a person tests positive but has no symptoms?**

If the person remains asymptomatic, they are required to self-isolate for 10 days past the date on which the positive test was collected. (If the positive result is from an antigen test, a PCR test should be taken within 48 hours to confirm the result.)

If the person develops symptoms, isolation must be extended until 10 days have passed since the onset of symptoms.

8. **Why test on Day 3, 4 or 5 if it isn’t required?**

The 10-day quarantine option allows close contacts who have remained asymptomatic, to return on Day 11 without testing, but a test on day 3, 4, or 5 is recommended (not required), so why do it?

- Because people can transmit the virus at least 2-days before developing symptoms, discovering that you are positive early can prevent many of your friends, classmates, and co-workers from having to quarantine. You also reduce the chance that you may pass the virus on to others.
- If you do test positive, you’ll have to self-isolate for 10 days, but once you have recovered you will not be required to quarantine following close contact for 90 days from when your symptoms started.