

COVID Testing and Contact Tracing FAQs

Over the last several weeks we have had several more positive cases of COVID-19 and subsequently more students and staff members who have been quarantined. There have been a lot of questions about why it takes so long to get notified of after exposure, who is quarantined, how fast we notify those individuals, how we determine how long a person is quarantined for. So, I thought I would put together some FAQs to help answer some of those questions.

Why does it take so long to get notified after exposure?

When a person becomes ill with symptoms of COVID-19, they are generally very mild (especially in teens and children), therefore they may wait a couple of days before making the decision to take their child in for testing. ([Daily Checklist](#)). Testing sites are booked out for several days (<https://www.kenoshacounty.org/2058/COVID-19-Testing-Locations>), and results take several days to get back. Therefore, when we get the result of a test, it may be already a week or more after the person had their first symptoms.

How is a person determined to be a close contact?

There are several determining factors:

- First of all, we need to look at people that the person who is positive came into contact with 2 days prior to their first symptom. The person is most infectious during this time, yet did not even know that they were sick. So again, when we are telling you that you were a contact of the person a certain day, this was before that person became ill, before the person even went in to get tested.
- Was there direct physical contact with the person? (for example, a hug, kiss, or handshake).
- Was the individual **within 6 feet of the person for more than 15 minutes**? This includes single encounters of than 15 minutes OR multiple encounters within a single day adding up to more than 15 minutes
- Did the individual have contact with the person's respiratory secretions (for example, coughed or sneezed on; contact with a dirty tissue; shared a drinking glass, food, towels, or other personal items).

We have gone through all of our classrooms and worked through seating charts, determining spacing in all classrooms. When we have a student that is positive, we go through all of the data to determine exactly which students need to be quarantined and who are at risk. We ask who the student sits with at lunch, who they hang out with after school, do they take the bus, what activities they may be involved in. We try and get every detail to make sure that every student who has been in contact is identified. Might we miss something? Absolutely, we are human. If you believe your student was a close contact of an individual who is positive, give us a call and we will talk about it.

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Are whole classrooms always quarantined?

Sometimes it is necessary to quarantine the whole classroom, sometimes it is not. In the beginning of the school year, during our first cases, through the guidance of the Kenosha County Division of Health we were advised to close down the entire classroom including the teachers. However, since then we have gone over our particular room set ups and room ventilation and other measures that we have put into place with the Health Department and they have allowed us to make decisions based on our particular situations. Therefore, now, when we are identifying your child as a close contact, they really are a close contact based on where they are sitting in the classroom to the infected individual. We still may need to quarantine an entire classroom at times, but it will depend on the situation.

How fast are parents notified of a positive case and that their child is going to be quarantined?

Reports of positive cases thus far have been coming in from the parents or the person who is positive, not from the Health Department or physicians office. When the report comes in, we need to obtain verification. This can be in the form of a copy of the result emailed to the school nurse, but we cannot proceed without concrete evidence of the positive. We cannot just take someone's word. While we are waiting for that information, we are usually gathering other information, such as student schedules, seating charts, attendance data, etc., so that as soon as we have the verified test result, we can move forward. During this time we are also in communication with the Kenosha County Division of Health. They guide us on dates of quarantine, who to quarantine and any other situations that arise with the case, as each one is different. We are meeting with administration, teachers, counselors, and secretaries to get all of this into place. All of this usually takes several hours to work through. However, it is completed and the phone call and email is sent out to parents on the same day, that the report of the positive test comes in.

How long is a person quarantined for?

A person is quarantined for 14 days from the date of exposure.

How come my child only had to quarantine for a few days?

If your child only had to quarantine for a few days, it was because the date that you were notified of their quarantine was after the date of the exposure. Therefore if the date of the exposure was 10/1 and you were not notified of the exposure until 10/10, your child would only have 4 days left of their quarantine period. (As you saw in the very first question, this could very easily happen). They should still quarantine, because they could still become positive for COVID through the 14 days.

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Do you need to take a COVID test if you quarantine for 14 days? The Kenosha County Division of Health recommends that you get tested approximately 5-10 days after being identified as a close contact, even without symptoms. <https://www.kenoshacounty.org/2058/COVID-19-Testing-Locations>

Sometimes people become infected with COVID-19 and do not show any symptoms, and a test would help identify if that is the case. A negative test result does not mean that your child will not develop symptoms or become sick after the test, it simply means that your child did not have COVID-19 detected at the time of testing. **(Please note: a negative test will not allow your child to come back to school or attend other activities sooner.)**

If my child is quarantined, does the rest of my family need to stay at home and quarantine as well?

No. Only the student who is quarantined needs to do so. A contact of a contact does not. However, if your child develops symptoms, your child should be tested and all family members should stay at home while waiting for the results.

If my child is in close contact with another child who is quarantined, do they need to quarantine as well?

No. Contacts of contacts do not need to quarantine. Only those who have been directly in contact with the positive person need to quarantine.

Do I really need to keep my student home for these symptoms?

Yes. If your child has the following symptoms they should be staying at home or if they come to school they will be sent home.

Cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new loss of smell or taste OR

At **least 2** of the following symptoms:

- Fever or chills
- Muscle pain/body aches
- Headache
- Sore Throat
- Fatigue
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

You are highly encouraged to contact your child's physician to obtain a COVID-19 test

YOUR CHILD MUST REMAIN AT HOME UNTIL:

- o **10 days** have passed since first symptom **AND**
- o Your child is symptom free for **24 hours** without the use of medication, **AND**
- o Other symptoms have improved, **OR**

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- Your child has been diagnosed with a condition other than COVID-19 that explains their symptoms (**documentation required**). [Must follow the exclusions for that illness](#)

Do you have any more questions? The Kenosha County Division of Health COVID-19 Response Hub has a lot of information. <https://kenosha-county-covid-19-response-kenoshacounty.hub.arcgis.com/>
If you have any more questions? Let me know. I would love to help - your school Nurse - Deanna Jarnigo jarnigod@wilmoths.k12.wi.us (262) 862-2351 X315