

Austin Public Health Quarantine and Isolation Guidance for Child Care Programs – March 29, 2022

The CDC released updated [guidance for the public](#) on quarantine and isolation. The following is APH guidance for child care programs on how to apply the guidance for the public in the child care setting.

I. ISOLATION

A. What is isolation?

[Isolation](#) is separating people who have COVID-19 or [symptoms of COVID-19](#) from those who are not infected or showing symptoms in order to prevent transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. People isolate when they show symptoms of COVID-19 or are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, even if they don't have [symptoms](#).

B. Who needs to isolate?

People who have confirmed or suspected COVID-19 or are showing symptoms of COVID-19 need to isolate regardless of vaccination status. More specifically,

- **People who have a [positive viral test](#) for COVID-19**, regardless of whether or not they have [symptoms](#).
- **People with [symptoms](#) of COVID-19**, including people who are awaiting test results or have not been tested. People with symptoms should isolate even if they do not know if they have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19.

C. How long should CHILDREN in child care isolate?

NOTE: The Texas Department of State Health Services [Communicable Disease Chart for Schools and Child Care Centers](#) was last updated 7/30/2021 and lists a 10-day isolation period for COVID-19. As of 1/11/2022, that chart had not been updated to include [CDC updates on shorter isolation](#).

Per the Communicable Disease Chart for Schools and Child Care Centers, the isolation criteria is as follows for children:

- If symptomatic, exclude until at least 10 days have passed since symptom onset, and fever free*, and other symptoms have improved.
- Children who test positive for COVID-19 but do not have any symptoms must stay home until at least 10 days after the day they were tested.

*Fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever suppressing medications. Fever is a temperature of 100° Fahrenheit (37.8° Celsius) or higher.

D. How long should STAFF in child care isolate?

Staff in child care programs who test positive for COVID-19 or have symptoms, regardless of vaccination status, must isolate for at least 5 days.

Calculating Isolation

If you had COVID-19 and had symptoms, day 0 is your first day of symptoms. Day 1 is the first full day after your symptoms developed.

If you test positive for COVID-19 and never develop symptoms, day 0 is the day of your positive viral test (based on the date you were tested) and day 1 is the first full day after the specimen was collected for your positive test.

If you develop symptoms after testing positive, your 5-day isolation period should start over. Day 0 is your first day of symptoms. Follow the recommendations above for ending isolation for people who had COVID-19 and had symptoms.

- These individuals should continue to wear a well-fitting mask around others at home and in public for 5 additional days (day 6 through day 10) after the end of your 5-day isolation period.
 - **If the individual is unable or unwilling to wear a mask when around others, they should continue to isolate for a full 10 days.** APH advises child care staff to consider whether they will be able to distance themselves 6 feet from others while working when their mask must be removed on days 6-10, and to isolate for 10 days if this is not possible.
- **Adults in child care programs who had symptoms may end isolation after 5 full days** if they are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and their symptoms are improving.
- **Adults in child care programs who did NOT have symptoms may end isolation after at least 5 full days** after their positive test.
- **Those who were severely ill with COVID-19** should isolate for at least 10 days.
- If an individual has access to a test and wants to test, the best approach is to use an antigen test towards the end of the 5-day isolation period. Collect the test sample only if you are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and your other symptoms have improved (loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation). If your test result is positive, you should continue to isolate until day 10. If your test result is negative, you can end isolation, but continue to wear a well-fitting mask around others at home and in public until day 10.

II. CLOSE CONTACTS & QUARANTINE

A. General guidance on close contacts

Masking

Anyone identified as a close contact of a COVID-positive individual should wear a well-fitted mask for 10 full days any time they are around others inside their home or in public (regardless of whether they are vaccinated or have recently had COVID-19), [per CDC](#). They should not go to places where they are unable to wear a mask.

Testing

- If they develop symptoms, they should [get tested](#) immediately and isolate until they receive their test results. If they test positive, follow [isolation](#) recommendations.
- If they do not develop symptoms, they should [get tested](#) at least 5 days after they last had close contact with someone with COVID-19. (Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 with a [viral test](#) within the previous 90 days and subsequently recovered, do not need to test unless symptoms develop.)
 - If they test negative, they can leave home, but continue to wear a [well-fitting mask](#) when around others at home and in public until 10 days after their last close contact with someone with COVID-19.
 - If they test positive, they should isolate for at least 5 days from the date of their positive test (if they do not have symptoms). If they do develop [COVID-19 symptoms](#), isolate for at least 5 days from the date their symptoms began (the date the symptoms started is day 0). Follow recommendations in the [isolation](#) section.
 - If they are unable to get a test 5 days after their last close contact with someone with COVID-19, they can leave their home after day 5 if they have been without [COVID-19 symptoms](#) throughout the 5-day period. Wear a [well-fitting mask](#) for 10 days after the date of last close contact when around others at home and in public.
- Refer to the “Flow Charts with COVID-19 Testing Guidance for Schools and Child Care” posted at [APH COVID-19 web page for child care providers](#) for details on when individuals can return to child care after testing.

B. What is quarantine?

Quarantine is a strategy used to prevent transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, by keeping people who have been in [close contact](#) with someone with COVID-19 apart from others. Note, the CDC’s close contact definition is the same whether the exposure occurred indoors or outdoors.

People **quarantine** when they have been exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19, based on their vaccination and [booster](#) status or history of prior infection in the past 90 days.

C. Who does not need to quarantine?

If you came into close contact with someone with COVID-19 and you are in one of the following groups, you do not need to quarantine.

- You are [up to date](#) with your COVID-19 vaccines.
 - [Per CDC](#), to allow time for children to catch up with the latest recommendations and to minimize disruption to in-person learning, child care programs may consider forgoing quarantine for students who completed their primary vaccine series but have not yet received all eligible boosters.
- You had confirmed COVID-19 within the last 90 days (meaning you tested positive using a [viral test](#)).

D. Who should quarantine?

If you come into close contact with someone with COVID-19, you should quarantine if you:

- Are not [up to date](#) on COVID-19 vaccines,
- Are unvaccinated, or
- Have not had confirmed COVID-19 within the last 90 days (meaning you tested positive using a [viral test](#)).

E. Which close contacts in a child care program need to quarantine and for how long?

Because **children who are under 2 years of age** cannot wear masks, these children should quarantine for a full 10 days from the date of last exposure.

If any of the children are age 5+ and have received a full primary vaccine series in the last 6 months, they do not need to quarantine and can return to the program but should mask consistently for at least 10 days.

For children ages 2+ who are not vaccinated, APH advises the following:

- These children could potentially quarantine for 5 days from last exposure ONLY IF the following criteria can be met:
 - They can consistently wear [well-fitting masks](#) for days 6-10 after exposure when they return to class, AND
 - They can be physically distanced 6 feet apart during snacks, meals, and naps.
- **If these criteria cannot be met, these children should quarantine for 10 full days.**

Calculating Quarantine

The date of your exposure is considered day 0. **Day 1 is the first full day after your last contact with a person who has had COVID-19.** Stay home and away from other people during quarantine.

If individuals in quarantine develop symptoms, they should [get tested](#) immediately and isolate until they receive their test results. If they test positive, they should follow [isolation](#) recommendations.

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| Individuals who were exposed to COVID-19 and are NOT up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccinations | Children under age 2 cannot mask, | . . . so they should quarantine for 10 days. |
| | Adults or children age 2+ who CANNOT doing the following on days 6-10 after exposure: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mask consistently AND• Be 6 feet apart from others when mask must be removed (snacks, meals, naps) | . . . should quarantine for 10 days. |
| | Adults or children age 2+ who CAN do the following on days 6-10 after exposure: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mask consistently AND• Be 6 feet apart from others when mask must be removed (snacks, meals, naps) | . . . may quarantine 5 days. They should wear a well-fitting mask on days 6-10 after exposure and distance 6 feet from others when mask must be removed. |

Example 1: Someone in the **1-year-old class** tests positive and all the children in the class are close contacts. Because children under age 2 cannot mask, all children in the class should quarantine for a full 10 days.

Example 2: Someone in the **3-year-old class** tests positive and all the children in the class are close contacts. Because the children cannot mask during nap time and there is not room to space them 6 feet apart during naps, snacks, and meals, all the children in the class should quarantine for a full 10 days

Example 3: Someone in the **4–5-year-old class** tests positive and all the children in the class are close contacts.

- Any children in the class **who are [up-to-date](#) on COVID-19 vaccinations** do not need to stay home unless they develop symptoms. They should wear a well-fitted mask for 10 full days any time they are around others and distance from others as much as possible when mask must be removed (such as while eating).
- Children who are unvaccinated or are not [up-to-date](#) on COVID-19 vaccinations, should quarantine for:

- 10 days if they CANNOT mask consistently AND be 6 feet apart from others when mask must be removed (snacks, meals, naps)
- 5 days and wear [well-fitting mask](#) on days 6-10 after exposure, only if they CAN mask consistently AND be 6 feet apart from others when mask must be removed (snacks, meals, naps)

Example 4: A child in a class tested positive. The two teachers were both in close contact with the child.

Teacher A is [up-to-date](#) on COVID-19 vaccinations. She does not need to stay home unless she develops symptoms. She should wear a well-fitted mask for 10 full days any time she is around others and she should distance from others as much as possible when her mask must be removed (such as while eating). **Teacher B is not [up-to-date](#) on COVID-19 vaccinations.** Because he can mask consistently and distance from others when eating and drinking, he can quarantine for 5 days, wear a [well-fitting mask](#) on days 6-10 after exposure, and distance 6 feet from others when his mask must be removed.