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Health Department of Northwest Michigan COVID-19 Update

State updates quarantine guidance for students exposed to COVID-19

To help ensure Michigan students and educators are as safe as possible in the classroom and keep students in school for in-person learning, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) [has issued updated quarantine guidance](#). The school quarantine guidance for asymptomatic students who were exposed to a student infected with COVID-19 varies depending on a variety of circumstances including mask wearing, distancing, and whether the students were vaccinated or not.

While applauding MDHHS for the change, Dr. Josh Meyerson, Medical Director for the Health Department of Northwest Michigan, cautioned parents and students to remain vigilant and, if eligible, get vaccinated against COVID-19.

"We have already received reports of several cases of COVID infection affecting our schools in the first few days of school," he said. "Vaccination is the best way to protect against COVID-19. Students and staff who have been vaccinated and are exposed (close contacts) are able to continue to attend in person class, but should consider getting tested 3-5 days after exposure and if any symptoms develop within the 14-day post exposure period. The next best way to keep children in school is to have universal masking. In classrooms where the person infected and the person exposed are both masked, no quarantine is required if they are at least 3 feet apart.

"The one big change to the MDHHS guidance is that it allows for a quicker return (now 7 days from the standard 10) to the classroom of quarantined students if they test negative on day 7," Dr. Meyerson added.

When layered prevention strategies such as masking, distancing, testing, isolation and quarantine are applied consistently, school-associated transmission of COVID-19 is significantly reduced - which keeps kids in the classroom so they can learn, said Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS director. "However, if someone is exposed to COVID at schools, it's important for them to follow quarantine guidance to prevent spread to other children."

Local health departments and schools work together to quickly isolate COVID-19 cases among students and staff, identify close contacts of those cases and adopt quarantine policies that reduce the risk of transmission in schools while allowing in-person learning. When evidence-based prevention measures, including universal masking, are in place, modifications may be made to the 10- to 14-day at-home quarantine.

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. For more information, visit nwhealth.org.

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The best protection against COVID-19 are the three safe and effective vaccines that are available, and all eligible people are urged to get vaccinated. Yet, because many students are too young to be vaccinated, masks are an important tool to prevent the spread of the virus and allow for in-person learning to continue uninterrupted, health officials note.

School quarantine guidance for asymptomatic students who were exposed to a student infected with COVID-19 varies depending on a variety of circumstances. The [updated guidance from MDHHS](#) details exposure scenarios informing students and parents how they can keep their student in school after an exposure, based on testing, and when the student should stay home to quarantine. In all cases, the student who has tested positive for COVID-19 should isolate and follow directions from their local health department.

Any individual that displays [COVID-19 symptoms](#), regardless of vaccination status, should be tested and isolate as directed. MDHHS is providing schools antigen testing supplies free of charge through the [MI Safe Schools Testing program](#). Schools and individual school districts can request antigen test kits through the Mi Safer Schools: [School Antigen COVID Test Ordering form](#). MDHHS will be leveraging its partnership with Intermediate School Districts to help distribute COVID-19 antigen tests based on the orders placed in the School Antigen COVID Test Ordering Form.

Getting vaccinated is the number one priority to limit the spread of COVID-19. The health department offers convenient COVID-19 vaccination clinics for all area residents and visitors 12 and older either by appointment ahead of time or simply walking in. Parent consent is required for minors. Anyone may call 800-432-4121 if they have questions or are not able to find a time or date that works for them and/or their child. Clinics offer client choice of Pfizer, Moderna or J&J unless otherwise noted. Upcoming clinics for walk-ins or appointments include:

Friday, September 10

- 8:15-11:30 a.m. - Health Department of Northwest Michigan, 220 W Garfield Ave., Charlevoix. To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)
- 8:15-11:35 a.m. - Health Department of Northwest Michigan, 95 Livingston Blvd., Gaylord. To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)

Monday, September 13

- 1-4:30 p.m. - Health Department of Northwest Michigan, 205 Grove St., Mancelona. To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)

Wednesday, September 15

- 8:15-11:30 a.m. - Health Department of Northwest Michigan, 3434 M-119, Harbor Springs. To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)
- 1-4:30 p.m. - Health Department of Northwest Michigan, 220 W Garfield Ave., Charlevoix. To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)

Friday, September 17

- 1-4:30 p.m. - Health Department of Northwest Michigan, 95 Livingston Blvd., Gaylord. To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)

The calendar on the website www.nwhealth.org lists clinics currently scheduled through September 30.

Stay up to date on the latest information in the Health Department of Northwest Michigan jurisdiction by [liking and following our Facebook page](#) and visiting our [COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#). To locate a testing facility, visit the [Michigan COVID-19 Test](#)

[Finder website](#). To track the risk levels of COVID-19 pandemic indicators, visit the [MI Safe Start Map website](#). For more information regarding the COVID-19 vaccine, visit the MDHHS [vaccine website](#) or the [CDC vaccine website](#).

CUTLINE: [This graphic](#) illustrates updates the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services has made to its school quarantine guidance for students exposed to COVID-19.

School Quarantine Guidance

What to do when a student is exposed to COVID-19 but doesn't have symptoms.

Masking helps keep kids in the classroom.

Michigan.gov/Coronavirus

= Vaccinated
 = Stay in-person
 = Stay home

If the COVID-exposed student was:	Then they should:
Vaccinated, regardless of masking and distancing.	Test on day 3, 4, or 5 and monitor symptoms for 14 days.
Distanced 3–6 feet and masked AND the COVID-positive student was masked.	Monitor symptoms for 14 days.
Less than 3 feet apart and masked AND the COVID-positive student was masked.	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="background-color: #c6e0b4; padding: 5px; text-align: center; width: 45%;"> Daily test for 7 days and monitor symptoms for 14 days. </div> <div style="font-weight: bold; margin: 0 5px;">OR</div> <div style="background-color: #a6c9ec; padding: 5px; text-align: center; width: 45%;"> Stay home for 7 days, return after day 7 with negative test or return after day 10. </div> </div>
Unmasked OR the COVID-positive student was unmasked.	Stay home for 7 days, return after day 7 with negative test or return after day 10.