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Health Department of Northwest Michigan

Fall '22 Back-to-School Recommendations

Moving the COVID-19 story forward with focus on preventing all infectious diseases

Current back-to-school protocols for COVID-19 are evolving from pandemic emergency to a more standard tactic to controlling respiratory viral diseases, [such as influenza](#). While the onset of a more threatening variant could alter this approach, families and schools can focus on illness prevention and responding to in-school clusters of cases, according to “Managing Communicable Diseases in Schools,” a recently published guide by the Michigan Board of Education (MBE) and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

“There has been significant progress in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 with vaccines and medical treatments,” said Holly Campbell, Health Department of Northwest Michigan (HDNW) Deputy Health Officer. “We do need to remain vigilant, however, taking into consideration those in our communities who are older or have [underlying medical conditions](#) that put them at higher risk of developing serious complications.”

Strategies to prevent the spread of infectious diseases continues to include:

- Stay current with COVID-19 and other [immunizations](#),
- Create a supportive environment for anyone choosing to wear a mask,
- Follow isolation guidelines when diagnosed with or showing symptoms of illness,
- Promote testing, symptom monitoring, and potential quarantine,
- Continue to report illnesses to the school and the [local health department](#) as required by public health code, and
- Consult [guidelines](#) for when to keep children home from school.

“These are reasonable and responsible approaches toward keeping our communities healthy,” said Amanda Thompson, HDNW Family Health Director and Interim Deputy Health Officer. “We all need to remain diligent in preventing the spread of communicable diseases.”

If COVID-19 or other infectious diseases increase, school officials will refer to plans they have established for how to best keep students and staff safe. Those plans include tracking local data on outbreaks, assessing the risk of rising infections, and the percentage of local vaccination rates.

School closure should be a last resort, according to MBE and MDHHS. Most area schools have, however, closed in the past when high levels of absences have occurred from both COVID-19 and various strains of flu. The closures provide time for cleaning and help interrupt transmission of the disease to contain the outbreak.

To [schedule a vaccine](#) before sending children back to school, call 800-432-4121 or visit <https://www.nwhealth.org/imms.html>.

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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Stay up to date on the latest information in the Health Department of Northwest Michigan jurisdiction by [liking and following our Facebook page](#). We provide COVID-19 testing and a variety of vaccines at our regular clinics in Charlevoix, Gaylord, Harbor Springs/Petoskey, and Mancelona. 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](#).