The Public Schools of Brookline
Health Services

FAQs for Families

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. 'CO' stands for corona, 'VI' for virus, and 'D' for disease.' The COVID-19 virus is a new virus in 20**19** linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

❏ Fever (100.0° Fahrenheit or 37.8 C) chills, or shaking chills

❏ Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)

❏ Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath

❏ Newly loss of taste or smell

❏ Sore throat

❏ Headache *when in combination with other symptoms*

❏ Muscle aches or body aches

❏ Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea

❏ Fatigue, when in combination with other symptoms

❏ Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) *when in combination with other symptoms*

These symptoms are similar to the flu (influenza) or the common cold. This is why testing is required to confirm if someone has COVID-19.

Do I need to do a daily COVID-19 symptoms check at home before my child attends school?

Yes. You will need to take your child's temperature every day before school and perform a symptoms check. If your child has any of the COVID-19 Symptoms listed below your child must stay home and you should contact your child's health care provider and the school nurse.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person (generated through breathing, coughing, sneezing). Individuals can also be infected from touching surfaces contaminated with the virus and then touching their face (e.g., eyes, nose, mouth). The COVID-19 virus may survive on surfaces for several hours or days, but simple disinfectants can inactivate it.

Who is most at risk?

We are learning more about how COVID-19 affects people every day. Older people, and people with chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease, appear to be more at risk of developing severe symptoms. As this is a new virus, we are still learning about how it affects children. We know it is possible for people of any age to be infected with the virus, and since it is a new virus, we need to learn more about how it affects children. The virus can be fatal in rare cases affecting mostly older people with pre-existing medical conditions.

What is the treatment for COVID-19?

There is no currently available vaccine for COVID-19. However, many of the symptoms can be treated and getting early care from a healthcare provider can make the disease less dangerous. There are several clinical trials that are being conducted to evaluate potential therapeutics and vaccines for COVID-19.

What can I do to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

As with other respiratory infections like the flu or the common cold, public health measures are critical to slow the spread of illnesses. Public Health measures are everyday preventive actions that include:

- taking your child's temperature daily before school to make sure its below 100F (37.8*C)
- keeping your child home if they present with any of the listed COVID-19 symptoms
- covering mouth and nose with a face covering or mask
- washing hands often with soap and water or use of hand sanitizer frequently, at least before meals or using the restroom, entering/exiting the school building and before putting on/removing your mask
- cleaning frequently touched surfaces and objects
- maintaining physical distance of 6 feet between people

What do I need to do to make sure my child is ready to return to the school buildings?

Parent Return to School Checklist

☐ Verify state required immunizations for school are current and submit documentation

☐ Follow [Massachusetts travel orders](#) requiring quarantine upon return from most out of state locations

☐ Provide an updated care plans and medication forms signed by your child's health care provider to the school nurse if your child needs medication at school. *Note: nebulizer treatments will not be allowed at school. Providers may consider ordering a metered dose inhaler with a spacer for school use instead.* [PSB School Health Services](#)*: click: Health Documents/Forms*

☐ Update your child's emergency contact list and establish a plan to immediately pick up your child if called by the school nurse

☐ Gather supplies you will need regularly:

- A working thermometer at home
- An adequate supply of face coverings for each school day so there is at least one to wear and a backup – put your child's name on the masks
- A bag/container with your child's name on it in order to have a place to store the mask
- A refillable water bottle (water bottle filling stations will be available; water fountains will be closed.
- Hand sanitizer if you choose to send your child with a personal supply

What should I do if my child has a fever/ symptoms of COVID-19?

- Call your child in ill by using the absence call-in line. Make sure you say <u>why </u>your child is out sick.
- Call the nurses office or leave a number where you can be reached on the absence call-in line.
- Call your child's PCP for advice about where to get a COVID-19 test.
- Keep your child quarantined in your home until you receive the test results.
- If your child has symptoms and the test comes back **negative,** they may return to school when they have improvements in symptoms and have been without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication.
- If your child tests **positive**, isolate your child (separate from family members). They may return to school at a minimum of 10 days after symptoms first appeared if they are also 72 hours symptom free without any fever reducing medicine
- If your child has symptoms and does **not** get tested, they must remain at home quarantined (must stay in the home) for at least 10 days from symptom onset and at least 24 hrs after symptoms resolve without fever reducing medicine.
- If your child has been exposed, has no symptoms and has not been tested they must quarantine (stay in home) for 14 days from last exposure. If they do get a test and are negative, they may return to school only after consulting the school nurse.

What happens if my child gets sick at school?

It is <u>imperative</u> that the parent/guardian or designated caretaker pick the student up within 30 mins of a call to prevent the possible spread of COVID-19.

If your child gets sick at school:
- the school nurse will be notified by the teacher and the student will be brought to the nurse's office for evaluation
- If the nurse assesses your child and they do have *any* symptoms of COVID-19, the student will be placed in a supervised isolation room until they can be picked up.
- Upon arrival the parent will call into the nurse's office with your location and the student will be brought to you.

Prepare your child that nurses will be dressed in PPE (gown, mask, face shield, and gloves) and that the student will be isolated if COVID is suspected, so that they are not unnecessarily anxious while they wait for pick up.

What will happen if my child tests positive for COVID-19? Who will be told?

If your child tests positive for COVID-19, since it is a reportable disease, the Brookline Health Department will be notified by the lab. The Health Department will offer assistance identifying those most at risk for exposure and will initiate contact tracing to minimize the spread at school and in the community.
Your child's name or other identifying information will not be revealed if diagnosed with COVID-19. Close contacts will be notified and told that they have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and will be provided with information about quarantine requirements. No personal identification will be given to others.

What is the definition of a close contact?

Close contact is defined as:
- Being less than 6 feet from a confirmed or clinically diagnosed COVID-19 case for at least 10-15 minutes, while the case was symptomatic or within the 48 hours before symptom onset. OR
- Having direct contact with infectious secretions of a confirmed or clinically diagnosed COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on) while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment or PPE (e.g., gown, gloves, facemask, eye protection).

Who should be tested?

Recommended timing of testing for close contacts:
- Close contacts without symptoms should be tested as soon as possible after they are notified of their exposure to COVID-19. The contact is required to quarantine for the full 14 days, even following a negative test result.

- Close contacts that develop any symptom at any time during their quarantine period should be tested promptly. Testing should occur even if the person previously had a negative test result during their quarantine period.
- All close contacts should be tested but must self-quarantine for 14 days after the last exposure to the person who tested positive, regardless of test result. Even if an individual identified as a close contact receives a negative test result, they must continue to self-quarantine for the full 14 days as the virus may take up to that long to cause illness.

Where can I get tested for COVID-19?
Contact your healthcare provider if you think you need to be tested

[COVID-19 Testing Sites in Massachusetts](#)

[COVID-19 Free Testing Sites in MA](#)

Link to testing: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/stop-the-spread

What happens if there is a case of COVID-19 at my child's school?
The school nurses will be working in conjunction with the Brookline Health Department staff to monitor potential COVID-19 cases as well as any confirmed positive cases. Recognizing the requirement of maintaining medical confidentiality, you will be notified if your child is a close contact of a case.

A general notification will be shared with the building-based school community if there has been a confirmed case of COVID-19. No names or identifying information will be provided, per legal requirements.

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Contact tracing will be conducted to determine who is a close contact of a positive case.

What if my child is a close contact?
Confirmed cases will be contacted by school nurses and health department staff to

identify who their close contacts are (this is contact tracing). Close contacts must quarantine for 14 days.

Who conducts contact tracing in Brookline?

Contact tracing is conducted by Brookline Health Department. Brookline school nurses work closely with our health department.

Interviews are conducted with cases who are confirmed positive and people who are close contacts during the infectious period are identified. Those close contacts are then called and provided with further instructions.

What if a PSB staff person or student who is not a Brookline resident tests positive?

The health department in the staff member's home community will determine the case's workplace. That information will be shared with the Brookline Health Department for additional follow up. Additionally, staff will be asked to report to their building principals or school nurse that they are being tested for COVID-19 and report testing results.

If someone is diagnosed with COVID-19, when can they return to school?

Self-isolation for COVID-19 positive cases is a minimum of 10 days. Most people who test positive and have a relatively mild illness will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days. People who test positive can resume public activities after 10 days and once they have:

- experienced 3 days without a fever (without taking fever-reducing medications like Tylenol); and
- experienced improvement in other symptoms (for example, their cough has significantly improved); and
- received clearance from public health authority contact tracers (the health department or Community Tracing Collaborative).

Repeat testing prior to return is not recommended. Return to school is based on time and symptom resolution.

What would cause my child's classroom or school to close?

Such decisions will be made either by state officials or by our local Board of Health in conjunction with school administration. The decision will be based on data that indicates significant viral transmission that is occurring within a particular school and/or throughout the district.

Will there be a 14-day quarantine period required for students or staff prior to school opening?

No. However, anyone who travels at any time must abide by the Massachusetts travel order. And we encourage everyone to continue to be vigilant about wearing face coverings and maintaining physical distance and good hand hygiene to continue to limit virus transmission.

How should I talk to my child about COVID-19?

Remain calm. Remember that children will react to both what you say and how you say it. They will pick up cues from the conversations you have with them and with others.

- Reassure children that they are safe. Let them know it is okay if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Make yourself available to listen and to talk. Let children know they can come to you when they have questions.
- Avoid language that might blame others and lead to stigma.
- Pay attention to what children see or hear on television, radio, or online. Consider reducing the amount of screen time focused on COVID-19. Too much information on one topic can lead to anxiety.
- Provide information that is truthful and appropriate for the age and developmental level of the child. Talk to children about how some stories on COVID-19 on the Internet and social media may be based on rumors and inaccurate information. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Teach children everyday actions to reduce the spread of germs. Remind children to wash their hands frequently and stay away from people who are coughing or sneezing or sick. Also, remind them to cough or sneeze into a tissue or their elbow, then throw the tissue into the trash.
- If school is open, discuss any new actions that may be taken at school to help protect children and school staff.
- Child friendly comic and cartoon links:

https://protect-us.mimecast.com/s/y7KsC5y1LxcWQ60ATz-8qu?domain=npr.org
https://protect-us.mimecast.com/s/00LfCPN5QII5rNXOszkwV2?domain=brainpop.com

Websites:
https://www.mass.gov/doc/dese-fall-reopening-guidance
https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-frequently-asked-questions
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/talking-with-children.html

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