



CANTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Protocols for Responding to COVID-19

Updated January 9, 2024

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Introduction

The following **Canton Public Schools COVID-19 Protocols** were developed in September 2021 and updated January 2022, March 2022, September 2022, and January 9, 2024 with respect to the current recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, and in collaboration with the School Physician and the Canton Board of Health.

COVID-19 Protocols are District-wide. Protocols will be reviewed and updated as new information is made available with state and local COVID-19 data and transmission trends, and consultation with local health officials, and guidance from DESE and DPH may influence modifications of the protocols.

Communication regarding COVID-19 will support the CPS “Culture of Caring”, providing information on health and safety to parents/guardians, students, and staff in a variety of ways including website information school community messaging. Communication may provide information about specific incidents and also general updates when appropriate.

This document outlines the Covid-19 protocols for Canton Public Schools for the 2024-2025 school year. In addition, it includes the Canton Public Schools Face Coverings Policy.

Key Definitions

Close contacts presenting symptoms from the Covid-19 symptom list in Section 1 should follow testing and quarantine response protocols as outlined in Section 2 of this document. These individuals may also seek clinical guidance to assess the need for PCR or antigen testing if they have symptoms on the list.

Home Self Screener:

Home Self Screening is encouraged as a daily “at home wellness check” and can found [here](#). We are asking families and staff to pause before leaving for school and take note of how they are feeling. If any of the symptoms listed below (COVID-19 symptoms list) are new, please stay home and call your school nurse. Communication with the nurse is key. The Canton Nursing Team is there to assist families and staff regarding any health concerns they may have.

Definition of a close contact:

Close contacts are defined as individuals who have been within 6 feet of a COVID-19 positive individual masked or unmasked while indoors, for at least 15 minutes during a 24-hour period.¹ Please note that the at-risk exposure time begins 48 hours prior to symptom onset (or time of positive test if asymptomatic) and continues until the time the COVID-19 positive individual has completed their isolation which is typically 5 days.

Face Coverings

The Canton Public School District is committed to providing a safe environment for students and staff.

Therefore, in accordance with updated guidance, the following recommendations and requirements are in place beginning until further notice.

- **Individuals who are immunocompromised are not required to wear a mask but are strongly recommended to do so in school buildings and on school grounds.**
- **The CDC states that anyone returning from 5-day isolation following a positive COVID test should wear a high quality mask when around others in home and in public until at least day 11*-other than when eating, drinking.**
- **All members of the Canton school community will contribute to a culture of respect, tolerance and inclusivity for those who choose to or must wear a mask, as well as to those individuals who cannot wear a mask, or choose to not wear a mask in instances where mask wearing is strongly recommended.**

In the instances where masks are recommended, CPS will require all students and all staff to wear masks and or face coverings with 2 or 3 layers that adequately cover both their nose and mouth, and are well-fitted to the individuals. Medical quality surgical or N95 masks are also acceptable. Some masks and/or face coverings are not appropriate for the school setting and include bandanas, gaiters (neck scarfs), masks with vents, and masks with inappropriate language in violation of the District dress code. A student's mask or face covering is to be provided by the student's family. Staff members should provide their own masks. In the instances where masks are required above, per CDC guidance, individuals may be excused from the requirement for the following list of reasons. Specifically, if the individual:

- has trouble breathing.
- is unconscious.
- is incapacitated.
- cannot remove the mask or face covering without assistance.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/isolation.html>

Surgical masks rather than cloth masks are strongly recommended. Staff members are responsible for providing their own face coverings. This policy will remain in place until revisited by the School Committee in conjunction with DESE and DPH and Board of Health recommendations.

SOURCE: CPS Policy– February 17, 2022

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Revised January 9, 2024

Approved: March 8, 2024

Section 1: COVID-19 symptoms list

Below is the full list of symptoms for which caregivers should monitor their children, and staff should monitor themselves. The symptoms list below applies to all individuals, regardless of vaccination status. Individuals who experience any symptoms on the list below should follow the testing and isolation response protocol for symptomatic individuals (Protocol C) as outlined in Section 2 of this document.

- Fever (100.0° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- New loss of taste or smell
- Muscle aches or body aches (not due to a known cause such as strenuous exercise)
- Cough (not due to a known cause, such as chronic cough), *when in combination with other symptoms.*
- Sore throat, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Headache, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Fatigue, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Nasal congestion or runny nose, *when in combination with other symptoms*

Section 2: Recommended testing response protocols

This section outlines testing response protocols for individuals – students and staff –

who test positive for COVID-19, and symptomatic individuals.

Overview of Protocol Categories:

- Protocol A: For individuals who test positive for COVID-19
 - Protocol B: Protocol for asymptomatic close contacts
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Protocol A: For individuals who test positive for COVID-19

Protocol A for individuals who test positive

- **Duration:** Self-isolation for COVID-19 positive cases is a minimum of 5 days after symptom onset or after a positive PCR or antigen test, if asymptomatic.
- **Return to school:** After 5 days and once they have:
 - Been without fever for 24 hours (and without taking fever-reducing medications); and
 - Symptoms are mostly resolved or improving; and
 - Individuals who do not meet these criteria after 5 days must receive clearance from a physician or the school nurse before returning to school.
 - Per the updated protocols, individuals returning from a 5-day isolation and quarantine must mask for an additional 5 days (through day 10) when around others in school or on the bus, other than when eating, drinking, or outside. This means masks must be worn when individuals are waiting for meals or sitting at lunch tables after meals are finished.

Note: Return to school should be based on time and symptom resolution. Even with a 5-day isolation period, **repeat viral testing prior to return is not required.**

Protocol B: Protocol for asymptomatic close contacts

Guidance for children and staff in K-12:

- Quarantine is no longer required nor recommended for children or staff in this setting, regardless of vaccination status or where the exposure to a covid positive person occurred. All exposed individuals may continue to attend programming as long as they remain asymptomatic. If symptoms develop, testing is recommended. Children and staff who test positive should refer to Protocol A.

Frequently Asked Questions

Where can individuals receive an individual antigen test?

- Free Covid tests may be obtained through the link below:

<https://www.covid.gov/tools-and-resources/resources/tests>

When and how should antigen tests be used for diagnostic purposes?

- Rapid antigen tests perform best when the person is tested in the early stages of infection with COVID-19, when the viral load is generally highest.

What additional steps should schools take if someone presents symptoms of COVID-19?

- If someone is symptomatic at school or on the bus, they should be evaluated by the school health professional.

What should districts and schools do if they have a high volume of cases?

- Districts and schools will contact the DESE Rapid Response Help Center and the Massachusetts Division of Epidemiology and Immunization for guidance if experiencing a high volume of cases. Notification will also be provided to local boards of health and district leadership.

Where can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Vaccines continue to be the best way to protect against the effects of Covid-19. DESE and DPH strongly recommend any eligible students or staff receive the vaccine and booster from their primary care physician or through a pharmacy.

- For **CVS Pharmacy** locations offering the vaccine please click [HERE](#)
- For **Walgreens Pharmacy** locations offering the vaccine please click [HERE](#)

- For other Massachusetts COVID-19 vaccination sites please click [HERE](#)

Canton Nursing Team Contacts

DISTRICT NURSE LEADER: 781-821-5060 ext. 1113/*Nurse Lauren Pushard*

DISTRICT RESOURCE NURSE: 781-821-5060 ext. 1174/*Nurse Irene Keefe*

NURSE CASE MANAGER: 781-821-5060 ext. 1176/*Melissa Silverman*

CHS: 781-821-5050 ext. 2110 or 2114/*Nurses Christine Trendell & Maureen Campbell*

GMS: 781-821-5070 ext. 3110 or 3186/*Nurses Tara Medeiros & Lindsey Coppola*

HANSEN: 781-821-5085 ext. 4102/*Nurses Bethany Glennon & Denise Shepard*

JFK: 781-821-5080 ext. 5102/*Nurse Ellen Stenmon*

LUCE: 781-821-5075 ext. 6109/*Nurse Cindy Bonner*

RODMAN: 781-821-5060 ext. 1508/*Nurse Bailey Hewit*

Additional Health Resources

Free Covid-19 tests:

<https://www.covid.gov/tools-and-resources/resources/tests>

Canton Health Department/Board of Health:

[Covid Information | Canton, MA - Official Website](#)

Center for Disease Control:

[Isolation and Precautions for People with COVID-19 | CDC](#)

Massachusetts Department of Public Health:

[COVID-19 Isolation and Exposure Guidance for the General Public | Mass.gov](#)

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:

[Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education](#)