

January 2022 FAQ for New COVID Guidance

Updated: January 12, 2022

[Spanish Version](#)

[Full Guidance - Shared 12/31/21](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[What should I do if I or my child tests positive at home \(with or without symptoms\) or I believe I/they may have Covid-19?](#)

[How do we know if an individual is “symptom free”?](#)

[COVID-19 symptoms list:](#)

[How do we apply Option 1 or 2 for an individual who was positive?](#)

[How will testing work upon returning from isolation?](#)

[What happens if an individual is vaccinated and has been in close contact with someone who is positive at home?](#)

[What happens if an individual is not vaccinated and has been a close contact with someone who is positive?](#)

[What if an individual has light symptoms but has not been able to get a test?](#)

[How can I consent for my student to participate in testing?](#)

[Full Guidance - Shared 12/31/21, updated 1/12/22](#)

Isolation & Quarantine Guidance: With the CDC’s recent shift in guidance regarding quarantine and isolation periods, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has also updated their guidance to districts. Given the unique environment of schools, in addition to the requirements from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Salem Public Schools will require a negative antigen test to exit isolation prior to Day 10 (Day 0 being the onset of symptoms or date of positive test).

- A. **Isolation:** If a student or staff member has tested positive, all individuals, regardless of vaccination status, should isolate for at least 5 days from symptom onset or from the date of the positive test.
 - a. **Option 1:** After the 5-day period has passed, if the isolating individual has been fever free and is not experiencing symptoms* for at least 24 hours, they may take an **antigen Covid test at home** (NOT a PCR-based or molecular test) to be eligible to return to school.
 - b. **Option 2:** If staff and students are unable to access a rapid test (SPS will do our best to assist in providing access), the individual must have no fever or symptoms for 72 hours without the use of any medication.
 - c. For either option 1 or 2, individuals must test negative **at school upon return**. See below for further information.
 - d. *If individuals do not consent to the test*, they must isolate for the full 10 days, in accordance with the previous guidance on isolation times from the CDC and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

- B. Quarantine:** When a student or staff member is a close contact in school, we utilize the “Test and Stay” (rapid antigen test) program for five days. Previously, only unvaccinated individuals could participate in the testing. Beginning next week, all vaccinated staff and students who are deemed close contacts will be able to take a test given what we have learned about the transmissibility of the Omicron variant, and have the option to participate in additional testing. As a reminder, unvaccinated close contacts that do not consent to participate in Test and Stay must quarantine and remain symptom free for at least five days.
- **Testing Consent:** If unvaccinated students do not have consent when they are identified as a close contact in school, they will be required to quarantine for 5 days. If you have not already enrolled your student in the district’s testing program, new consent forms will be sent home in the next week. You can also sign up for consent here: <https://bit.ly/SPS-TestConsent>
 - **Distancing and Masks:** With the increased transmissibility of the variant, we are encouraging schools to space students at least three feet apart whenever possible. We are also purchasing KN95 masks for student use. These should be arriving in the next two weeks.
 - **Notifications and Contact Tracing:** The current surge in COVID cases requires that we focus on classrooms where we suspect spread may be occurring.
 - First two positive cases in a classroom: SPS will notify families after each of the first two cases of COVID-19 in a homeroom (PreK-8). All families will be asked to monitor for symptoms, but no individual close contacts will be identified.
 - Three or more cases in a classroom: If there is a third individual that is positive within the same class within the same week, nurses and teachers will identify close contacts for all cases.

		Fully vaccinated?	
		Yes	No
Consent to test?	Yes	Get a rapid test, remain in school & monitor for symptoms	Remain in school, enroll in test to stay (daily testing), & monitor for symptoms
	No	Remain in school & monitor for symptoms	Quarantine for five days & monitor for symptoms. Test recommended but not required to return.

- Individuals that have recovered from COVID-19 in the past 90 days will be exempt from quarantining.
 - ***For unvaccinated close contacts that do not have consent to participate in testing, families will be called and will be required to pick up their student from school.*** All other families will be notified via Parent Square.
 - We are doing our best to avoid the disruption of closing classrooms but recognize that this may be necessary should safety become a concern. We will evaluate each situation on a case-by-case basis.
 - At the high school level, nurses will continue to work with individuals that are identified as close contacts and offer a rapid test for vaccinated individuals with

consent and test to stay to unvaccinated individuals with consent on a case by case basis. Unvaccinated close contacts that do not have consent to test will be required to quarantine for five days.

Frequently Asked Questions

What should I do if I or my child tests positive at home (with or without symptoms) or I believe I/they may have Covid-19?

Do not come to work or school and stay at home.

Staff:

1. Report your impending absence to your supervisor by your usual mode of communication.
2. Call your primary care provider to inform them of the test results/symptoms and obtain instructions for isolation or quarantine.
3. Inform your supervisor of your plan to return to work. *For [Temporary Emergency Paid Sick Leave](#) due to Covid-related illness, signed documentation from a licensed healthcare provider is required and must be provided to Human Resources. Please contact Dave Turcotte (978-740-1115) or Nancy Weiss (978-740-1115) for further information on these laws.
4. Please read the above guidance regarding return to work.

Students:

1. Adult caregivers call the child's primary care provider (PCP) to inform them of test results/symptoms and obtain instructions for isolation or quarantine.
2. Notify your child's school of your child's absence and the plan for their return to school. *Signed documentation from a licensed healthcare provider for isolation requiring more than 5 school days is required and must be provided to your child's teacher upon return.
3. Please read the above guidance regarding return to school.

Staff Caring for Sick Children/Family Members:

1. Report your impending absence to your supervisor by your usual mode of communication.
2. Call the sick person's primary care provider (PCP) to inform them of test results/symptoms and obtain instructions for isolation or quarantine.
3. Inform your supervisor of your plan to return to work. *For [Temporary Emergency Paid Sick Leave](#) due to Covid-related illness, signed documentation from a licensed healthcare provider is required and must be provided to Human Resources. Please contact Dave Turcotte (978-740-1115) or Nancy Weiss (978-740-1115) for further information on these laws.

How do we determine when Day 5 is to return to school?

Counting during COVID: It is important to know when to start counting days to accurately apply the new guidance, and it is not always intuitive. Please follow these steps:

- Day 0 = day of symptom onset or positive test. We begin counting the next day.

- Day 1 = first day after symptom onset or positive test.
- Day 5 = required isolation for all positive individuals.
- Day 6 = earliest possible day of return to school with a negative antigen test if an individual was positive or at least 72 hours symptom free.
- *Example:* Positive test Wednesday (12/29), Day 1 = Thursday (12/30), Day 5 = Monday (1/3), earliest day of return is Day 6 = Tuesday (1/4) (the following week) after the positive test or the symptoms began pending Option 1 or Option 2 guidance below.

How do we know if an individual is “symptom free”?

To return to school, individuals must be without a fever or other symptoms without using any fever reducing or cold/flu medicine for at least 24 hours. Please review the list of COVID-19 symptoms below. We will be applying this to the best of our ability as a community. For example, if an individual is otherwise symptom free but still is a bit fatigued, this would be considered without symptoms if there is no combination of other symptoms. In addition, if all other symptoms have resolved and an individual still has not regained taste and smell, but this is not a *new* symptom, this would be considered ‘without symptoms.’ **Students must be without fever and without symptoms to return to school prior to day 11 of isolation in the case of a positive.**

COVID-19 symptoms list:

- 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
- Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- 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 (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) *when in combination with other symptoms*

How do we apply Option 1 or 2 for an individual who was positive?

The CDC has reduced the recommended isolation time for asymptomatic individuals from 10 days to 5 days. Rapid antigen tests, to date, [correlate closely](#) with infectiousness. If returning to school prior to the full 10 day isolation period, SPS is requiring a negative rapid test to return to school OR three days symptom free. The days without symptoms can begin before day 5 but students cannot return until five full days of isolation, or on day 6.

- Those who do not have a test must be symptom free for 72 hours. The 72 hours can begin on day one for those who are fully asymptomatic (but they cannot return before day 6).
- All individuals returning prior to the full 10 days of isolation need a confirmatory one-time negative rapid test at school on the morning they return. Therefore, **individuals may ONLY**

return prior to 10 days if they have consent to test prior to returning. We cannot give tests without consent so students will need to be picked up if they do not have consent.

How will testing work upon returning from isolation?

First, please know that Monday morning will require grace as we stand up new protocols. Thank you for understanding as we do our best to make this work.

For staff returning from isolation before Day 10: Staff must complete an at-home rapid test and get a negative result to return prior to day 10 of isolation. Additional tests can be picked up at SHS on Sunday, January 2nd, from 11am-2pm. On Monday morning, please report to the isolation room at your school at least 20 minutes before students arrive to complete the iHealth test. You may leave before the 15 minutes are complete, and there will be instructions for how to leave the test. Testing team members will be there to read and confirm results.

For students returning from isolation before Day 10: Please remember no one can return to school prior to Day 6 (see above for how to count). If your student is between day 6 and day 10, students must have consent to test to return to school (Please click [HERE](#) to enroll in testing). If this is the case, please send your child to school with a note that includes the following information:

- I am writing to inform you that my student was positive for COVID-19 over the winter break.
- Date symptoms began or that the student was asymptomatic
- Date individual became symptom free
- Date of positive test

Students should be instructed to give the note to their homeroom teacher immediately upon arrival. The testing team is working with each school to ensure someone is there to support testing Monday morning. Students will be sent to the nurse's office to meet the testers to get their confirmatory negative test.

What happens if an individual is vaccinated and has been in close contact with someone who is positive at home?

Vaccinated individuals who are home-based contacts should monitor for symptoms. If there are no symptoms, they can continue to come to school. If they develop symptoms, they must remain home and contact their physician (and try to get a test).

What happens if an individual is not vaccinated and has been a close contact with someone who is positive?

Unvaccinated individuals who are home-based contacts must quarantine for five days (returning on the sixth) with day zero being the last day of contact. If it is not possible to isolate from the positive case, day zero begins the day the positive would be released from isolation as indicated above. We strongly recommend using a rapid test on day five or six after exposure to test the unvaccinated close contact.

What if an individual has light symptoms but has not been able to get a test?

Please remember, daily symptom checks are an essential layer of protection to mitigate the spread of the virus. If an individual has any symptoms, they must stay home from school and contact their primary care provider first, and then the school. Individuals will still be required to get a negative test to return to school if symptomatic, or wait until symptoms resolve.

How can I consent for my student to participate in testing?

Please click [HERE](#) to enroll in testing. Please note, per the state guidance, consent is for all components of the testing program. SPS is not able to provide electronic consent to individual portions of the testing program. **If students are not enrolled in the testing program, they must isolate for the full 10 days prior to returning to school in the event that they are positive. If unvaccinated students are identified as a close contact and do not have consent to test, they will be required to quarantine for five days.**