COVID-19 Prevention in Kindergarten (K)-12 Schools

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cdc.gov/coronavirus
Disclaimer

- This presentation is meant to outline strategies that schools can use to help maintain healthy environments and operations, lower the risk of COVID-19 spread in their programs, prepare for when someone is sick with COVID-19, and support coping and resilience. The information covered in this presentation is not exhaustive.
- For access to CDC's full suite of materials and resources for youth settings, please see CDC’s Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Kindergarten (K)-12 Schools: Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools | CDC
- The information in this presentation is current as of August 5, 2021.
Updated Guidance
Key Takeaways

- Students benefit from in-person learning, and safely returning to in-person schools in the fall 2021 is a priority.
- This guidance emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies (e.g., using multiple prevention strategies together consistently).
- Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Schools should require universal masking for all students, teachers, and staff in K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status or level of community transmission.
Prevention Strategies to Reduce Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in K-12 Schools
The importance of layered prevention strategies in schools

- Safely open for in-person instruction and remain open
- Children can get sick from COVID-19
- Children can spread the virus
- Not all students are eligible for vaccination
Primary Factors to Consider for Decision-Making

- Level of community transmission
- COVID-19 vaccination coverage
- Use of a SARS-CoV-2 screening testing program
- COVID-19 outbreaks
- Ages of children served
Prevention Strategies

- Promoting vaccination
- Consistent and correct mask use
- Physical distancing
- Screening testing to promptly identify cases, clusters, and outbreaks
- Ventilation
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
- Staying home when sick and getting tested
- Contact tracing, in combination with isolation and quarantine
- Cleaning and disinfection
Promoting COVID-19 Vaccination

- CDC recommends that everyone ages 12 and older get fully vaccinated against COVID-19.
- To promote vaccination, schools can:
  - Visit vaccines.gov to find local vaccination sites.
  - Educate families about COVID-19 vaccination.
  - Support staff vaccination.

Sources: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/summer-camps.html
Consistent and Correct Mask Use

**Indoors:** Schools should require universal mask use for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors regardless of vaccination status and level of community transmission.

**Outdoors:** In general, people do not need to wear masks.

**During School Transportation:** Passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses.
Physical Distancing

- Implement physical distancing to the extent possible.
- Do not exclude students from in-person learning to keep a minimum distance requirement.
- In combination with universal masking, schools should maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance. If it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 3 feet, mask use is critical.

Screening Testing in K-12 Schools

- Screening testing identifies infected people, including those with or without symptoms (or before they develop symptoms) who may be contagious so that measures can be taken to prevent further transmission.
- People who are fully vaccinated do not need to participate in screening testing and do not need to quarantine if they do not have any symptoms.

To be effective, the screening program should test students at least once per week and report results rapidly (within 24 hours).
## Screening Testing Level in K-12 Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Low Transmission(^1) Blue</th>
<th>Moderate Transmission Yellow</th>
<th>Substantial Transmission Orange</th>
<th>High Transmission Red</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Do not need to screen students.</td>
<td>Offer screening testing for students who are not fully vaccinated at least once per week.</td>
<td>Offer screening testing for students who are not fully vaccinated at least once per week.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers and staff</td>
<td>Offer screening testing for teachers and staff who are not fully vaccinated at least once per week.</td>
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<tr>
<td>High risk sports and activities</td>
<td>Recommend screening testing for high-risk sports(^2) and extracurricular activities(^3) at least once per week for participants who are not fully vaccinated.</td>
<td>Recommend screening testing for high-risk sports and extracurricular activities(^3) twice per week for participants who are not fully vaccinated.</td>
<td>Recommend screening testing for high-risk sports and extracurricular activities(^3) twice per week for participants who are not fully vaccinated.</td>
<td>Cancel or hold high-risk sports and extracurricular activities virtually to protect in-person learning, unless all participants are fully vaccinated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low- and intermediate-risk sports</td>
<td>Do not need to screen students participating in low- and intermediate-risk sports.(^2)</td>
<td>Recommend screening testing for low- and intermediate-risk sports(^2) at least once per week for participants who are not fully vaccinated.</td>
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[1](#) Transmission levels are based on the proportion of new cases within the school. Low transmission is defined as 0-99 new cases per 100,000 people; moderate transmission is defined as 100-299 new cases per 100,000 people; substantial transmission is defined as 300-999 new cases per 100,000 people; and high transmission is defined as 1,000 or more new cases per 100,000 people.

[2](#) High-risk settings include high transmission settings, high-risk industries, and high-risk sports and extracurricular activities.

[3](#) Extracurricular activities include sports, music, and theater groups.

Ventilation

- Improving ventilation reduces the number of virus particles in the air.
- Bringing fresh outdoor air into a building helps keep virus particles from concentrating inside:
  - Open multiple doors and windows.
  - Use child-safe fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows.
  - Make changes to the HVAC or air filtration systems.
- Funds provided through the Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief Programs and the Governors Emergency Education Relief Programs can support improvements to ventilation.

CDC Youth Resources

COVID-19 General Resources:

- People at Increased Risk: [Do I need to Take Extra Precautions Against COVID-19 | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions.html)
- [What to do if a Student Becomes Sick at School or Reports a New COVID-19 Diagnosis Flowchart | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/education/pdf/covid-19/cdc-covid-sick-student-flowchart.pdf)
CDC Youth Resources (Continued)

For Administrators and Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers:

- Guidance for Schools and Child Care Centers: School Settings | COVID-19 | CDC
- Guidance for Direct Service Providers, Parents, Caregivers, and Guardians, and People with Developmental and Behavioral Disorders: Caring for People with Developmental and Behavioral Disorders | COVID-19 | CDC

Coping and Resilience Support Numbers:

- National Distress Hotline: call or text 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255), 1-888-628-9454 for Spanish
For more information, contact CDC
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.