

WHEN STUDENTS MISS SCHOOL FOR ILLNESS, GUIDE TO CLEARANCE, & WHEN TO KEEP STUDENT HOME

Effective March 27th, 2024, Richmond Consolidated School Guidance for students and staff will follow the recommendations for the general population regarding what to do when you have symptoms of any respiratory illness, like flu COVID-19, and RSV.

School health offices are health care settings. The school nurse should follow the [guidance for health care settings](#).

Overview of things you can do to help [prevent the spread](#) of respiratory viruses:

- Get vaccinated for [flu](#) and [COVID-19](#)
- Stay home when you are sick (follow the recommendations below)
- Use hand and respiratory [hygiene](#)
- Wear a [mask](#) around others
- Get [tested](#) for flu and COVID-19 so you can get [treated](#)
- Avoid crowded areas and maintain [physical distance](#)
- Increase [fresh air](#)

This School Nursing Guidance includes the following information:

1. If you have symptoms of a respiratory virus (isolation)
2. If you have tested positive for a respiratory virus but do not have any symptoms
3. If you were exposed to someone with a respiratory virus illness (exposure precautions)
4. Protecting people with risk factors for severe illness from respiratory viruses
5. Health Services Guidance: Illness & Dismissal
6. References

1. If you have symptoms of a respiratory virus (isolation)

If you have new symptoms of a respiratory virus, such as a fever, sore throat, cough or a runny or stuffy nose, you should stay home and stay away from others in your household.

While you are staying at home:

- Get **tested** for COVID-19 and flu. Talk to your healthcare provider about getting **treatment** if you test positive.
- Stay away from others in your household. Wear a mask when you have to be around them.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze. Use a tissue or your inner elbow, not your hands.
- Clean **high-touch** surfaces (such as countertops, handrails, and doorknobs) often.

You should stay home even if you don't know what virus is making you sick. When you start to feel better you may begin to resume normal activities with precautions if:

1. You have not had a fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicines; AND
2. Your other symptoms are improving

You may still be able to spread the virus that made you sick, even if you are feeling better. For at least the first 5 days after you resume normal activities, take these extra precautions:

- Avoid crowded indoor spaces. Wear a mask anytime you are indoors around other people
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid spending time with people who are at [increased risk for severe disease](#)

If your symptoms get worse again:

If your fever comes back or any other symptoms start to get worse, you should go back home until you are better again. Wait to resume normal activities until you have not had a fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicines AND your symptoms are improving again. When you resume normal activities, take the recommended additional precautions during the next 5 days:

- Avoid crowded indoor spaces
- Wear a mask indoors around other people
- Wash your hands often
- Cover your coughs and sneezes

2. If you have tested positive for a respiratory virus but do not have any symptoms, you can still spread the virus. Take additional precautions to protect others from getting sick. For at least the first 5 days, take these extra precautions:

- Avoid crowded indoor spaces. Wear a mask anytime you are indoors around other people.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.

- Avoid spending time with people who are at [increased risk for severe disease](#).
- Although not required, choosing to stay home for about 72 hours may help reduce the chances that you spread the virus to others. While you stay home you should:
 - Stay away from others in your household. Wear a mask when you have to be around them.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
 - Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze. Use a tissue or your inner elbow, not your hands.
 - Clean [high-touch surfaces](#) (such as countertops, handrails, and doorknobs) often. If you develop any respiratory symptoms:

If you get a fever, or any other symptoms of respiratory illness, you should go home. You may begin to resume normal activities with some precautions when:

1. You have not had a fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicines; AND
2. Your symptoms are improving again

Then, take the recommended extra precautions during the next 5 days:

- Avoid crowded indoor spaces
- Wear a mask indoors around other people

- Wash your hands often
- Cover your coughs and sneezes

3. If you were exposed to someone with a respiratory virus illness (exposure precautions)

If you have been exposed to someone with a respiratory virus, you do not need to stay home as long as you remain asymptomatic. You may be able to spread a respiratory virus before developing symptoms.

To protect others, especially those with [risk factors for severe illness](#), take precautions:

- Wash your hands often
- Consider wearing a mask and avoiding crowded places
- Monitor yourself for symptoms carefully

Stay home if you start to develop any signs of illness.

4. Protecting people with risk factors for severe illness from respiratory viruses.

When you are sick from a respiratory virus, you may spread germs for about 10 days after your symptoms start or after a positive test, even if you don't have symptoms.

Be aware that some people around you may have risk factors for more severe disease. Masking, physical distancing, hand hygiene, and covering your coughs and sneezes helps protect them.

People at increased risk can include:

- Older adults
- Individuals with chronic underlying medical conditions, for example heart, lung, liver or kidney disease
- Young children, especially those under 2 years old
- People with weakened immune systems
- People with disabilities
- Pregnant people

5. Health Services Guidance: Illness and Dismissal

When your child is not feeling well during the school day, the School Nurse is available in the School Health Office to assess your child. We ask parents/care providers to please have a plan in place to pick up your child in case he/she needs to be dismissed from school for illness or accidental injury. If a student has symptoms of illness needing to be dismissed, the school nurse will contact the parents/care providers as listed on your child's Emergency Contact sheet. We will contact all names you listed on the Nurse Emergency Contact sheet until someone is reached.

Please keep in mind that your child can be ill and contagious without the presence of a fever.

Below is a list of common health issues for your reference. This is a partial list as the School Nurse's assessment determines when a student is unwell and in need of a nursing dismissal from school. Thank you.

- FEVER- We consider a temperature of 100 degrees or higher a fever. Children should remain at home fever-free for 24 hours without taking Tylenol or Motrin.
- VOMITING/DIARRHEA- Children should remain at home symptom-free for 24 hours and are able to ingest fluids and food comfortably.

- CONJUNCTIVITIS- Your child must be on an antibiotic for 24 hours after the first dose before returning to school. Good hand-washing for the entire family is essential to prevent its spread.
- STREP THROAT- Children cannot return to school until 24 hours after the first dose of antibiotic is taken. They should feel well enough to return to school. Some children feel ill for several days with strep infections.
- SUSPICIOUS RASH- Children with rashes that are suspicious should have them evaluated by a physician and be cleared to return to school.
- MONONUCLEOSIS- Please contact the school nurse if your child is diagnosed with mono. Your child's physician will most likely place restrictions on their physical activity and temporary accommodations can be arranged at school.
- HEAD LICE- Please refer to our link section for specific information on treating head lice. Children must be treated with a pediculosis (such as Nix) before returning to school. Please contact your child's physician for advice on which product he recommends. You should accompany your child to school and the nurse will check them before they return to the classroom.
- FIFTH'S DISEASE- Children are no longer contagious by the time symptoms appear with this viral illness. Fifth's disease is of concern to pregnant women and should be reported to the school nurse.
- CHICKENPOX- Your child should remain at home five days or until all areas are crusted over, completely dry and no new areas are breaking out.
- IMPETIGO- Your child must remain at home until 24 hours after the first dose of antibiotic.

6. Resources

Current Guidance from Mass DPH/DESE Staying home to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses/recommendations for the general public
[Staying home to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses | Mass.gov.](#)

LAST REVIEWED: MARCH 27, 2024