

August 23, 2023

RE: COVID-19 Prevention Reminders

Dear Students, Families, and Staff,

It's an exciting time as students, teachers, and staff begin the new school year. Your school and leadership have been doing a great job preparing facilities to welcome people back to campus. Though COVID transmission is not currently high, the disease is still spreading and can cause serious illness and increases in transmission are likely to occur this fall and throughout the upcoming flu season. For these reasons, we want to share some important reminders for this school year.

Follow Isolation and Quarantine Guidance

We know it can be scary and stressful to find out you or your student has COVID-19 or were a close contact of a case. It can also be confusing if you're hearing different or conflicting information. Here are the [guidelines set by the Washington State Department of Health](#), which apply for all schools and childcares in Snohomish County when it comes to isolation and quarantine.

A student, child, or staff member who tests positive for COVID-19 should isolate at home or where they are currently residing, regardless of vaccination status. They can return after 5 days if:

- they are asymptomatic or their symptoms have improved, AND
- they have had no fever for the past 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.

Day 0 is the first day of symptoms. For people without symptoms, day 0 is the day of the positive viral test.

Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 should follow the [Washington State Department of Health "What to do if you test positive for COVID-19"](#) guidance. Individuals who have potentially been exposed to a person with COVID-19 during their infectious period should follow the [Washington State DOH "What to do if you were potentially exposed to someone with COVID-19"](#) guidance.

Stay Home When Sick

If your child has symptoms of illness, they should stay home from school, child care, and other activities. COVID-19 is not the only illness that may be spreading this fall and winter, as it is also flu and RSV season. Symptomatic children may spread an illness even if they test negative for COVID-19. To keep your school and community healthy, and to prevent our healthcare system from becoming overwhelmed, it is important for anyone who is sick and potentially contagious to avoid events and gatherings.

Get Vaccinated and Boosted

COVID-19 vaccines are available for ages 6 months and older. Please check with your healthcare provider to make sure you and your family are up to date on vaccines, including all recommended boosters for their age and health status.

These vaccines offer protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death. They have been extensively studied, reviewed, and have been widely used, with millions of doses given. They are a safe and effective option to help keep children healthy. As a reminder, there are a number of ways to look for available vaccine appointments. Contact your primary care provider, local pharmacy or visit www.snohd.org/covidvaccine for more resources, as well as information on what vaccines are available for your child's age group.

Get Tested

Unfortunately, we've previously heard reports of parents or friends urging people not to get tested to avoid an isolation period. Testing and isolating are critical to help reduce the spread of this potentially severe illness. People should test even if they have minor symptoms or only one symptom. Along with testing through healthcare providers, at-home antigen tests are readily available.



People should remain home and away from others while symptomatic and/or awaiting test results. When seeking medical care, we recommend calling ahead so they know you are coming and can take the proper precautions such as masking and enhanced hygiene.

More info on testing can be found on our website at www.snohd.org/testing. Those without internet access or needing language assistance can reach the Health Department's call center Monday-Friday during business hours at 425.339.5278 for help finding testing resources.

Reporting

Reporting of confirmed or suspected outbreaks continues to be required as described in WAC 246-101. Department of Health guidance requires schools to notify The Snohomish County Health Department if:

- they suspect COVID is spreading in their cohort **or**
- there are **FIVE or more confirmed or suspected cases among a cohort in a 7-day period or**
- multiple COVID-19 cases from positive tests comprising at least 20% of a cohort (students, teachers, or staff within a specified core group) within a 7-day period.

Continue to report school absenteeism greater than 10% to Snohomish County Health Department. Consider additional prevention strategies when transmission levels of viral respiratory illnesses are high. Additional guidance on the control of communicable diseases can be found in the [OSPI Infectious Disease Control Guide for School Staff](#).

Thank you and your students for your perseverance and attention to these health and safety measures.

The team at the Snohomish County Health Department would like to wish you a safe, healthy, and enjoyable 2023-24 school year.

Sincerely,



James Lewis, MD, MPH
Health Officer