# COVID-19: WHEN A STUDENT, OR FACULTY/STAFF MEMBER CAN RETURN TO SCHOOL

**Purpose:** The purpose of this document is to assist school health care staff and public health officials in determining if a student, or faculty/staff member needs to be excluded from the facility for COVID-19 quarantine or isolation. The chart uses three criteria to determine this: close contact, symptoms, and COVID-19 test status.

**How to use:** The first step is to determine if the individual was a close contact to a COVID-19 case based on the definition below and then selecting the appropriate chart on the next page. The second step is to determine if the individual is showing symptoms of COVID-19 (symptomatic) or not. Finally determine if they were tested for COVID-19 and the result of the test. Key definitions are provided below:

**Isolation** means keeping sick people away from healthy ones. This usually means that the sick person rests in their own bedroom or area of your home and stays away from others. This includes staying home from school.

**Quarantine** means separating people who were around someone who was sick, just in case they get sick. Since people who were around other sick people are more likely to get sick themselves, quarantine prevents them from accidentally spreading the virus to other people even before they realize they are sick. Usually people who are in quarantine stay at home and avoid going out or being around other people. This includes staying home from school. You can develop COVID-19 anytime during the 14 days after your last close contact with someone who has COVID-19. In order to prevent spreading COVID-19 to others, you must quarantine, which means you must stay home from work, school, and other activities. **When quarantining, you should always**: Monitor your symptoms for 14 days after your last exposure to COVID-19 and stay home from school, work, and other activities and get tested as soon as possible if you develop symptoms. If positive, follow isolation guidance for people who test positive; if negative, continue quarantining.

**It is safest if you quarantine for 14 days after your last exposure.** No test is required to end quarantine. **You do have other options for quarantine. These options are to:**

- Quarantine for 10 days after your last exposure. No test is required to end quarantine. Monitor yourself for symptoms until 14 days after your last exposure.
- Quarantine and get tested for COVID-19 6 or 7 days after last exposure. If your test is negative, you could end quarantine after 7 days of quarantine. You must have your negative test result before ending quarantine and the test cannot be before day 6. Monitor yourself for symptoms until 14 days after your last exposure.

**Close contact:** An individual is considered a close contact if **any** of following is true:

- Were within 6 feet of a positive person for more than 15 minutes total in a day.
- Had physical contact with the person.
- Had direct contact with the respiratory secretions of the person (i.e., from coughing, sneezing, contact with dirty tissue, shared drinking glass, food, or personal items).
- Lives with or stayed overnight for at least one night in a household with the person.

According to the CDC close contact exception, the definition of a close contact can be excepted in specific circumstances in the K-12 indoor classroom. More specifically, if two students are engaged in consistent and correct use of well-fitting masking and are not within 3 feet of each other, they would not be considered close contacts. This means that if one of the masks students were to become infected with COVID-19, the other masked student would not have to quarantine from school.

Close contacts who completed a COVID vaccine series two or more weeks before the exposure or were diagnosed with COVID in the 90 days before the exposure do not need to quarantine but should be tested 3-5 days after exposure, and should wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result.

## SYMPTOMS

Symptoms are considered consistent with COVID-19 when one of the symptoms marked with a (^) or two of the other symptoms are present above baseline for that individual.

Cough^    Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing^    New loss of taste or smell^    Congestion or runny nose    Fever or chills

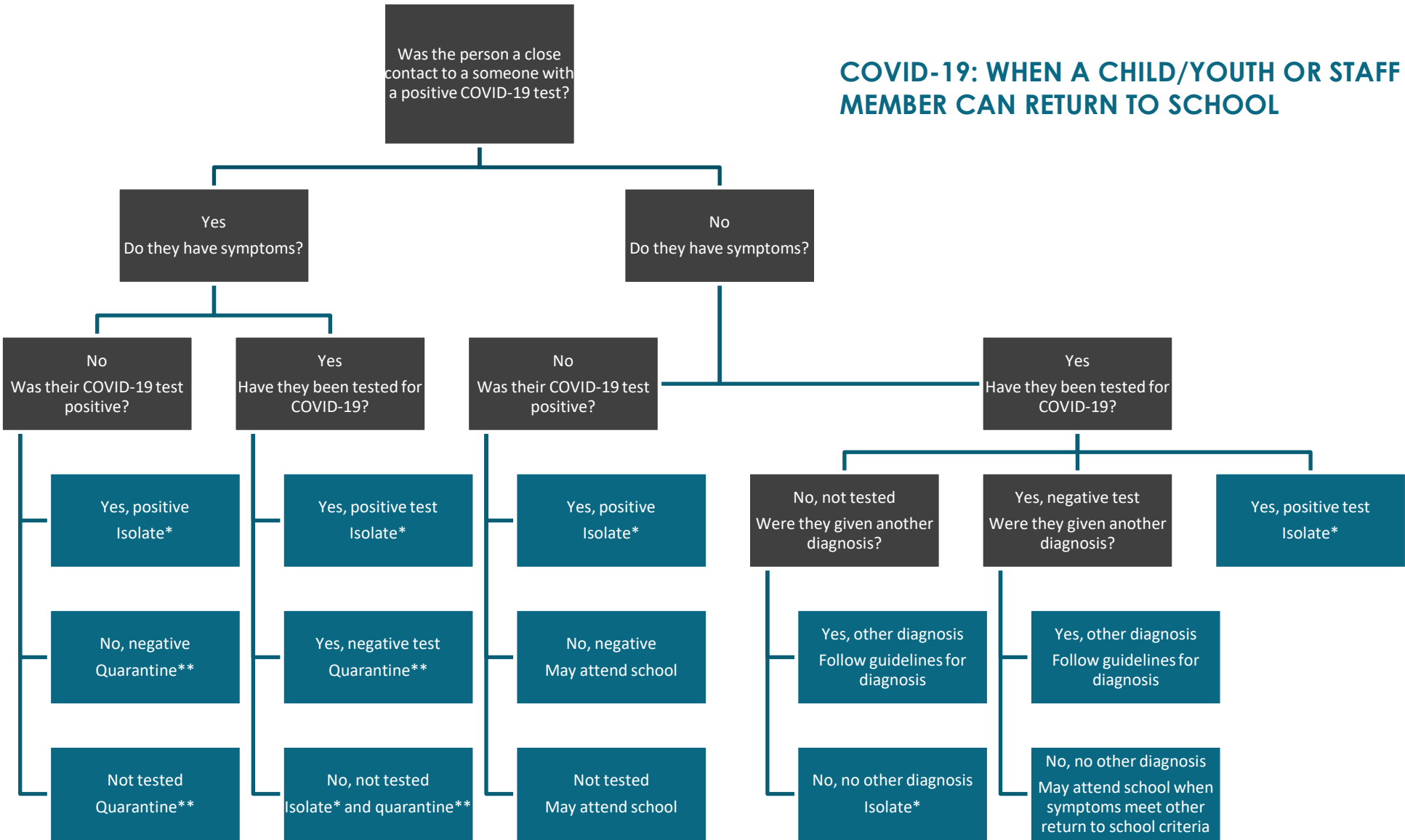Nausea or vomiting    Diarrhea    Headache    Fatigue    Muscle or body aches    Sore throat

## Individual is NOT a known close contact to a COVID-19 case:

| Individual | Symptomatic | No Symptoms |
|---|---|---|
| **Not tested for COVID-19** | <ul><li>The individual must remain home for at least 10 days since the first symptoms began AND be fever free without the use of fever-reducing medications for 24 hours AND with improvement of symptoms.</li><li>Siblings and household members do not need to be excluded (different from DHS guidance).</li><li>If diagnosed with another condition that explains the symptoms, such as influenza or strep throat, follow guidance from the health care provider and exclusion period of the diagnosed disease as listed on the Wisconsin Childhood Communicable Diseases Wall Chart</li></ul> | May attend school. |
| **Tested and negative for COVID-19** | <ul><li>The individual must be fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications</li><li>If diagnosed with another condition, the individual must complete the exclusion period for the diagnosed disease as listed on the Wisconsin Childhood Communicable Diseases Wall Chart. An alternative diagnosis is not required.</li></ul> | May attend school. |
| **Tested and positive for COVID-19** | <ul><li>The individual must isolate at home for at least 10 days since the first symptoms began AND be fever free without the use of fever-reducing medications for 24 hours AND with improvement in symptoms. Repeat testing is NOT recommended for making decisions about when people can return to work or school.</li><li>Siblings, household members, and other close contacts should follow the close contact chart below.</li></ul> | <ul><li>Must isolate at home for 10 days after the day the sample was collected.</li><li>Siblings, household members, and other close contacts should follow the close contact chart below.</li></ul> |

## Individual IS a known close contact to a COVID-19 case:

| Individual | Symptomatic | No Symptoms |
|---|---|---|
| **Not tested for COVID-19** | <ul><li>The individual must quarantine. The quarantine starts after the last contact with the COVID-19 positive person. It is safest if the individual quarantines for 14 days (see first page for other quarantine options). If the exposure is to a household member and the case cannot properly isolate away from others at home, the last date of contact may be the last day of isolation for the case.</li><li>The individual must also remain home for at least 10 days since the first symptoms began AND be fever free without the use of fever-reducing medications for 24 hours AND with improvement of symptoms.</li><li>**The criteria in both of the above bullets must be met before returning to school.**</li><li>Siblings and household members do not need to be excluded (different from DHS guidance).</li></ul> | Must quarantine (see first page) from the date of last exposure before returning to school or day care. If the exposure is to a household member and the case cannot properly isolate away from others at home, the last date of contact may be the last day of isolation for the case. |
| **Tested and negative for COVID-19** | <ul><li>The individual must quarantine. The quarantine starts after the last contact with the COVID-19 positive person. It is safest if the individual quarantines for 14 days (see first page for other quarantine options). If the exposure is to a household member and the case cannot properly isolate away from others at home, the last date of contact may be the last day of isolation for the case.</li><li>The individual must also be fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications AND if diagnosed with another condition, they must complete the exclusion period for the diagnosed disease as listed on the Wisconsin Childhood Communicable Diseases Wall Chart. An alternative diagnosis is not required.</li><li>**The criteria in both of the above bullets must be met before returning school.**</li></ul> | Must quarantine (see first page) from the date of last exposure before returning to school or day care. If the exposure is to a household member and the case cannot properly isolate away from others at home, the last date of contact may be the last day of isolation for the case. |
| **Tested and positive for COVID-19** | <ul><li>The individual must isolate at home for at least 10 days since the first symptoms began AND be fever free without the use of fever-reducing medications for 24 hours AND with improvement in symptoms. Repeat testing is NOT recommended for making decisions about when people can return to work or school.</li><li>Siblings, household members, and other close contacts should also follow this chart to determine quarantine length.</li></ul> | Must isolate at home for 10 days from the day the sample was collected. Siblings and household members and other close contacts should also follow this chart to determine quarantine length. |

# COVID-19: WHEN A CHILD/YOUTH OR STAFF MEMBER CAN RETURN TO SCHOOL

**Was the person a close contact to a someone with a positive COVID-19 test?**

## Yes — Do they have symptoms?

### No — Was their COVID-19 test positive?
- Yes, positive — Isolate*
- No, negative — Quarantine**
- Not tested — Quarantine**

### Yes — Have they been tested for COVID-19?
- Yes, positive test — Isolate*
- Yes, negative test — Quarantine**
- No, not tested — Isolate* and quarantine**

## No — Do they have symptoms?

### No — Was their COVID-19 test positive?
- Yes, positive — Isolate*
- No, negative — May attend school
- Not tested — May attend school

### Yes — Have they been tested for COVID-19?

- **No, not tested — Were they given another diagnosis?**
  - Yes, other diagnosis — Follow guidelines for diagnosis
  - No, no other diagnosis — Isolate*

- **Yes, negative test — Were they given another diagnosis?**
  - Yes, other diagnosis — Follow guidelines for diagnosis
  - No, no other diagnosis — May attend school when symptoms meet other return to school criteria

- **Yes, positive test — Isolate***

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*Isolate: Individual should not attend/work at school until it has been at least 10 days since symptom onset, they have been fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medications), and their other symptoms are improving

**Quarantine: Individual should not attend/work at school until quarantine is complete, following their last exposure to a person who was infectious. See page 1 for quarantine options and **note the close contact exception for fully masked students in the K-12 environment**. Close contacts who completed a COVID vaccine series two or more weeks before the exposure or were diagnosed with COVID in the 90 days before the exposure do not need to quarantine but should be tested 3-5 days after exposure, and should wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result.

When calculating isolation and quarantine, the date of symptom onset/positive lab test (for asymptomatic) or last date of exposure to an infectious person is day 0. For example, individuals may return to school on day 11 (isolation).