

## New COVID-19 guidance for schools: Suggested talking points

- **The CDC relaxes routine testing, quarantine, and social distancing recommendations.**
  - Schools no longer need to conduct routine testing. However, if community transmission is high in the area, schools should implement testing for high-risk activities, such as close-contact sports and the first day back from holidays.
  - The CDC no longer advises students or school staff who are exposed to the virus to quarantine. Instead, people who are exposed should wear a mask for 10 days and get tested on day five.
  - Schools do not need to divide students into “cohorts” anymore, a strategy used to reduce viral transmission.
- **The CDC shifts focus to improving ventilation and implementing safety measures for high-risk situations.**
  - The CDC no longer recommends social distancing. Instead, it emphasizes the need for improved ventilation in schools as a way to reduce viral transmission.
  - The agency continues to recommend masks indoors in areas with high community transmission. Currently, students in [40 percent of U.S. counties](#) should wear a mask in school.
  - Although routine testing is no longer recommended, the CDC still advises people to test when exposed, sick, or in high-risk situations.
  - Staying up to date on vaccinations, staying home when sick, and hand washing remain key aspects of both local and federal COVID-19 guidance.
- **The new guidance shifts the responsibility of risk reduction onto students and their families.**
  - The CDC relaxed its COVID-19 guidance to account for the fact that most Americans now have some sort of protection against COVID-19, either through prior infection or vaccination.
  - The new guidance aims to minimize disruptions at schools.
  - The best way to keep kids safe from COVID-19 is to get them vaccinated. [Fewer than one-third of children 5 to 11](#) have gotten two vaccine doses.
  - Parents can help limit transmission by testing their kids if they show symptoms, if there is a chance of exposure, or if they attended a high-risk event. The FDA recommends [taking three at-home tests if exposed](#) to increase the likelihood that the tests catch any positive cases.
  - Students can protect themselves and others by wearing high-quality, well-fitting masks in high-risk situations.

## New COVID-19 guidance for schools: Frequently asked questions

### **1. What changes did the CDC make?**

The CDC relaxed its recommendations on routine testing, quarantine, and social distancing. Schools no longer need to conduct routine testing for unvaccinated students, require exposed students and staff to quarantine, or divide students into “cohorts” as a way to reduce viral transmission. Instead, the CDC recommends schools focus on improving ventilation, using surveillance testing for high-risk scenarios, and encouraging mask-wearing during times of high community transmission. If exposed to the virus, students and staff should wear a mask for 10 days and get tested.

### **2. Why did the CDC make these changes?**

The CDC made these changes because most Americans now have some sort of protection against COVID-19, either through prior infection or vaccination. The agency’s goal now is to reduce severe disease, which can be done through vaccines, boosters, and treatments. For schools specifically, the new guidance aims to minimize disruptions to kids’ education. Instead of recommending school-wide protocols, the CDC largely shifts the responsibility of risk reduction onto students and their families, leaving it up to individuals to make their own decisions to protect themselves.

### **3. Is my kid still protected at school?**

The CDC’s guidance does not necessarily make schools less safe, but it does shift the responsibility of risk reduction onto students and their families. Parents may need to take more initiative in determining when to ask their kids to adopt additional safety measures at school.

Getting kids vaccinated is the first step. Kids remain at very low risk of severe disease from COVID-19, but it’s still a possibility. Getting infected also comes with the chance of spreading the virus to more vulnerable family members and developing long COVID symptoms. Parents can also help limit transmission by testing their kids if they show symptoms, if they have been exposed, or if they attended a high-risk event. The FDA recommends [taking three at-home tests if exposed](#) to increase the likelihood that the tests catch any positive cases. Finally, students can protect themselves and others by wearing high-quality, well-fitting masks in high-risk situations.