



CHELMSFORD
P U B L I C S C H O O L S

Covid-19 Home Testing Protocol at Chelmsford Public Schools – Dec. 5, 2021

It has come to our attention that many families have been using at-home tests for the COVID-19 virus. While we appreciate testing at home with the antigen test, the at-home test, in the school setting, is not considered a confirmed positive test. **Once you have a positive home test, please schedule a laboratory test (PCR) to confirm the positive home test immediately.**

The PCR test is the most accurate way to diagnose the COVID-19 virus. It is also important to contact your healthcare provider and school nurse to inform of the positive test.

It is important to note that, for now, the at-home test is discarded after use. The results of the home tests are not reported to the Department of Public Health and the positive test is not processed and sequenced in a lab. This will weaken the ability to track variants, discover mutations and document positive cases.

Testing is critically important to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. **If you have symptoms, or have been identified as a close contact, you should be tested regardless of vaccination status.** If you have recovered from COVID-19 within the past 90 days, you should consult with a healthcare provider before testing again.

If the test is positive for COVID-19, the positive individual must isolate away from others in the home. Please inform your healthcare provider and the school nurse of a positive test, as well as notify any close contacts. A close contact is someone who was within 6 feet (while indoors) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.

In consultation with the Chelmsford Board of Health, these are the recommendations for unvaccinated and vaccinated close contacts:

An unvaccinated close contact should:

- Quarantine and follow the testing and quarantine guidelines for the exposure.
- It is recommended that unvaccinated close contacts test immediately and then again on day 5.

- The rationale for testing immediately is that in the event of testing positive, the 10-day isolation period can begin sooner rather than later.
- Unvaccinated close contacts must monitor for symptoms for the full 14-days.
- Unvaccinated close contacts may participate in Test and Stay if the exposure to the positive case was in the school setting.
- To be eligible to participate in Test and Stay, consent for Test and Stay must be received by the school a minimum of three days prior to the exposure.
- [CLICK HERE to consent for Test and Stay](#)

***Please note:** If the exposure to the positive case was in the home or in the community, this is a higher risk exposure. Therefore, the quarantine must be completed at home and the close contact is not eligible to participate in Test and Stay.

In the school setting, vaccinated close contacts:

- Are exempt from testing and quarantine protocols.
- However, we recommend testing, as vaccinated close contacts in some instances are testing positive. Therefore, it is recommended (not required), to test immediately and if negative, to test again on day 3, 4 or 5.
- Vaccinated close contacts must wear a mask until a negative test is received.
- It is recommended that vaccinated close contacts monitor for symptoms for the full 14-days.

Nationwide, and in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, there has recently been an increase in the number of positive cases. However, the good news, is that due to the high vaccination rates, the symptoms experienced in most cases have been relatively mild. We have seen that same trend in our school community as well.

While we have seen an increase in cases in our school population, the vast majority of the positive cases have been traced back to exposures in the home or at an event outside of school. Understandably, we are seeing many signs of “COVID FATIGUE”- however, it is imperative to continue the practices that we know will stop the spread of COVID-19. We ask for your help promote the following mitigation strategies:

- STAY HOME IF NOT FEELING WELL
- If experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, test immediately and isolate until results are back
- If identified as a close contact, please follow the testing and quarantine protocols
- If diagnosed with COVID-19, please follow the 10-day isolation protocol
- Wear a mask while indoors (masks should fit snugly around the nose and mouth)
- Frequently wash hands with soap and water and/or use hand sanitizer.
- When feasible, maintain physical distance from others

Lastly, we strongly encourage those eligible to be vaccinated and to receive the booster. The COVID-19 vaccine and booster will increase the level of protection against the virus. The

vaccines have undergone, and will continue to undergo, intensive safety monitoring. Covid-19 vaccines are effective and can reduce the risk of getting and spreading the virus that cause Covid-19. Getting the vaccine can protect families, communities, and our schools.

The collective health of our school community, and our community at large, relies on a collaborative partnership with our families. This partnership requires our families to follow the best practices and guidelines that we know will decrease the spread of the virus.

As always, thank you all for your cooperation and continued efforts to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

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