# COVID-Safe for Schools (K–12)

## RESOURCE GUIDE

**COVID SAFE**

**Atrium** Health
**Levine Children's**

# Contents

# Introduction

The ever-changing nature of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has challenged school administrators, teachers and staff as they've worked diligently to create return-to-school plans. Similarly, many parents are having to make difficult decisions for their children regarding return-to-school options.

The health and safety of all individuals impacted is at the forefront of all planning and decision-making. However, social development and emotional well-being are also important considerations. As most people facing these tough decisions have come to realize, there isn't one approach that meets everyone's needs. Each student, family and staff member is navigating the pandemic differently, and their priorities for what the school year should look like vary greatly.

Atrium Health is committed to providing our community members, including school administrators, teachers, staff, students and parents, accurate up-to-date COVID-19 information to aid in their decision-making. This is why we created our COVID-Safe for Schools Resource Guide. This guide was developed following guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, as well as the expert advice and direction of our world-class specialists and medical leadership.

We hope you find the enclosed information helpful, and we look forward to serving as your trusted healthcare partner.

Ruth Krystopolski
*Senior Vice President, Population Health*
*Atrium Health*

# COVID-19 Overview and Symptoms

## What is Coronavirus?

Coronaviruses belong to a large family of viruses that cause colds and other respiratory illnesses. First identified in China in 2019, the current coronavirus outbreak is known as COVID-19, short for "coronavirus disease 2019."

While we're learning more about the virus each day, experts believe that COVID-19 typically spreads from person to person through airborne droplets deposited as an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people within about 6 feet of the infected person or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

Most people with COVID-19 experience only mild symptoms and can recover at home. However, sometimes COVID-19 causes more severe symptoms such as difficulty breathing, persistent chest pain or pressure, confusion, inability to wake up and bluish lips or face. If you feel your symptoms are life-threatening, call 911 or seek medical care immediately.

## COVID-19 Symptoms

While some infected individuals may experience no symptoms at all, those who do will typically develop symptoms between 2–14 days of exposure to the virus. Symptoms may be similar to those of a cold or the flu. People with the following symptoms may have COVID-19:

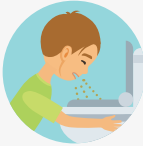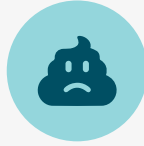| Fever | Chills | Headache | Cough |
|---|---|---|---|
| Repeated shaking with chills | Sore throat | Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing | Muscle pain |
| New loss of taste or smell | Nausea or vomiting | Diarrhea | Congestion or runny nose |
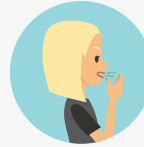
\* The CDC considers a person to have a fever when he or she has a temperature of 100.4° F (38° C) or greater, or feels warm to the touch, or gives a history of feeling feverish.

Atrium Health
Levine Children's

# Preventing Spread in Schools

Teachers, staff and families should refer to their school's comprehensive return-to-school plan for detailed guidance on how their school is working to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Highlighted below are some basic behaviors and actions that can reduce the spread of the virus in schools:

### Staying Home When Sick or Exposed

Individuals should stay home and notify school officials if they meet any of the following criteria:

- Are experiencing any COVID-19-like symptoms
- Tested positive for COVID-19
- Recently had close contact (within 6 feet for a cumulative total of 15 minutes over 24 hours) with someone who has COVID-19
- Recently had close contact with someone suspected of having COVID-19

Additional guidance related to teachers, staff and students who meet any of the above criteria can be found in the **School-Based Exposures** section.

Atrium Health
Levine Children's

# Preventing Spread in Schools CONT.

## Monitoring for Symptoms

### Teachers and Staff

- The overall health of the workforce is essential. Before entry into the work environment each day, teachers and staff should be screened for **signs and symptoms** of illness, such as fever, cough and shortness of breath.

- Consider gathering basic information, such as temperature, electronically. If an employee does not have home access to the internet or a thermometer, the information can be gathered upon arrival before entering the work environment.

### Students

- Parents or caregivers are strongly encouraged to monitor their children for signs of infectious illness every day.

- Children who are sick should not attend school in-person.

## Masks/Cloth Face Coverings

COVID-19 spreads mainly through droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. These droplets usually travel about 6 feet.

**Wearing a mask** in public settings and when around others who don't live in your household—especially in environments where physical distancing is difficult—can help block these droplets and is critical in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

For maximum protection, it's important to wear a mask properly:

- Wash or sanitize your hands before putting on your mask.
- Cover your mouth and nose.
- Make sure it fits snugly against the sides of your face.
- Use ties or ear loops to keep the mask in place.

### The Importance of Masks

In July 2020, the CDC called on all Americans to wear a mask, asserting that it is "one of the most powerful weapons we have to slow and stop the spread of the virus." And in early August 2020, the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington's School of Medicine released new data showing that if 95% of Americans consistently wore masks over the next 5 months, more than 66,000 lives would be saved.

Atrium Health Levine Children's

## Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

Even small behaviors when practiced consistently can make a big difference in reducing the spread of coronavirus.

- **Hand washing regularly**, especially after you've been out in a public setting, can help you stay healthy.

    - When washing hands, wet hands, lather with soap and warm water for 20 seconds, then rinse and dry.

- When soap and water aren't available, use a hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with hands that have not been cleaned.

- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue.

    - Throw used tissues in the trash and clean hands immediately with soap and water or hand sanitizer.

    - If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow, not your hands.

## Social Distancing

**Social distancing**, also called "physical distancing," means keeping a safe space (at least 6 feet) between you and others who aren't from your household. Social distancing is the best way to reduce the spread of coronavirus.

Schools conducting in-person learning will have multiple strategies in place to promote social distancing, such as spacing desks apart and providing physical guides to ensure that staff and children remain at least 6 feet apart in lines. Because limiting close face-to-face contact with others is critical to reducing the spread of COVID-19, teachers and staff need to remain vigilant about reinforcing and modeling school measures that support social distancing.

## Cleaning and Disinfection

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (e.g., school bus handrails, playground equipment, door handles, sink handles, drinking fountains) at least daily or between use as much as possible.

- Use of shared objects (e.g., gym or physical education equipment, art supplies, toys, games) should be limited when possible or cleaned between use.

Atrium Health Levine Children's
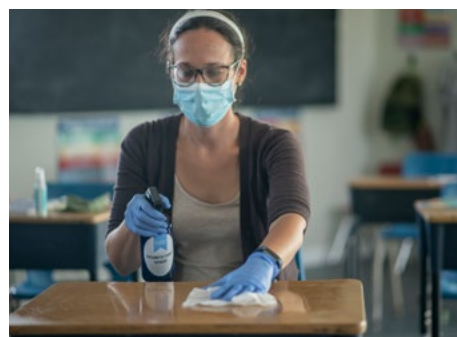
# Managing Stress and Anxiety

The COVID-19 pandemic has created uncertainty in all five elements of well-being—career, social, financial, community and physical—leading to record levels of stress and anxiety that far surpass those recorded in past years.

- Recent U.S. Census Bureau Data indicates that a third of Americans show signs of clinical depression and anxiety—a significant increase from before the pandemic.[1]

- Daily stress has increased from 48% to 65% and in a stunningly short period of time.[2]

- 69% of employees have indicated that the pandemic is the most stressful time of their entire professional careers.[3]

But it isn't just adults who are affected. Children and teens react, in part, to what they see from the adults in their lives. When parents, teachers and other adults deal with COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for children.

[1.] https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/covid19/pulse/mental-health.htm
[2.] https://www.gallup.com/workplace/307622/leaders-responding-covid-workplace-disruption.aspx
[3.] https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20200409005169/en/New-Data-Ginger-Shows-70-Percent-Workers

Atrium Health Levine Children's

# Managing Stress and Anxiety CONT.

## Supporting Children

### Ease Fears About Returning to the Classroom

- Have open conversations regarding what's worrying your child about returning to school.

- Let children know it's natural to feel anxious.

- Be open about what changes they can expect if they're going back into the classroom, such as wearing **masks/face coverings**.

- Reassure children about safety measures their school has put in place to keep students and teachers healthy.

- Remind children about the importance of following safety measures, such as staying 6 feet apart from others when not at home.

- Highlight the positives of going back into the classroom, such as seeing friends.

### Encourage Safety Measures

- Teach children about germs, explaining that even though germs are invisible, they can still be there.

- Explain how each safety measure provides protection. When children (and adults) understand why it's important to do something, they're more inclined to do it.

- Try to make learning fun; it doesn't have to be a scary conversation.

- Demonstrate how to follow safety measures, such as showing children how to sneeze or cough into a tissue or washing hands with soap and warm water by lathering for 20 seconds.

- Ask children in your care to tell you if they start to feel sick.

Atrium Health
Levine Children's

# Managing Stress and Anxiety CONT.

## Minimize Mask-Wearing Anxiety

- Approach the conversation with empathy.

- Explain that it's healthy to talk about worries and concerns.

- Reassure children that lots of adults are working hard to keep them safe.

- Emphasize the importance of following safety measures to take care of people in the community who are at risk of getting seriously sick.

## Address Feelings of Isolation

- For children who aren't returning to the classroom immediately, reassure them that schools will open again.

- Remind them that learning can happen anywhere—at school or home—and that they can support and keep in touch with friends online, by phone or in group video chats.

- Explore and suggest ways that children can connect with friends and relatives, such as the (safe and monitored) use of online games and social media.

- Get children excited about using online tools that get them moving, like exercise videos for kids.

- Encourage children to think about other ways they could bond with and stay connected to friends.

https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/supporting-your-childs-mental-health-during-covid-19-school-return

Atrium Health Levine Children's

## Teachers and Staff

Regardless of the return-to-school pathway chosen by your school, this pandemic has undeniably changed the way that teachers and staff work. In addition to dealing with fears and anxiety related to COVID-19, school staff is faced with the stress of doing their jobs in significantly different ways. These pressures combined with other strong emotions could be overwhelming, and job stress could lead to burnout.

During this time of adversity, coping with stress and building resilience are essential for the emotional health and well-being of critical frontline school staff. The first step is recognizing symptoms of stress.

### Symptoms of Stress

- Feeling irritation, anger or denial
- Feeling uncertain, nervous or anxious
- Lacking motivation
- Feeling tired, overwhelmed or burned out
- Feeling sad or depressed
- Having trouble sleeping
- Having trouble concentrating

Atrium Health
Levine Children's

# Managing Stress and Anxiety <span style="font-size:smaller">CONT.</span>

## Build Resilience and Manage Stress

- Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you're feeling.

- Take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories about COVID-19, including social media.

- Take care of your physical health— eat healthy balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, avoid excessive alcohol and drug use.

- Communicate openly with colleagues, supervisors and school administration about the causes of work stress and how the pandemic is affecting work.

- Identify things you don't have control over and do the best you can with available resources.

- Develop a consistent daily routine when possible—keep a regular sleep schedule, take breaks from work to stretch, exercise or check in with loved ones, spend time outdoors, do things you enjoy during non-work hours, and set a regular time to end your day if working from home.

- Know the facts about COVID-19. Be informed about how to protect yourself and others.

- Remind yourself that everyone is in an unusual situation with limited resources.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/mental-health-non-healthcare.html

Atrium Health
Levine Children's

# Managing Stress and Anxiety CONT.

## Parents

Whether children are returning to the classroom, transitioning to remote learning, or a combination of the two, the school experience will be very different than before. Parents should consider the following actions to support their child's mental health and social-emotional well-being:

- Watch for and anticipate behavior changes in your child (e.g., excessive crying or irritation, excessive worry or sadness, unhealthy eating or sleeping habits, difficulty concentrating), which may be signs of your child struggling with stress and anxiety.

- Talk with your child about how school is going and about interactions with classmates and teachers. Find out how your child is feeling, and communicate that what they may be feeling is normal.

*It's also important for parents to find positive ways to manage their own stress. Stress from COVID-19 could cause:*

- Fear and worry about your finances, job, loss of support services, or your health and the health of loved ones

- Changes in sleep or eating patterns

- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating

- Worsening of chronic health problems

- Worsening of mental health conditions

- Increased use of tobacco, and/or alcohol and other substances

## Cope With Stress in Healthy Ways

- Take care of your emotional health.

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including those on social media.

- Take care of your physical health—eat healthy balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, avoid excessive alcohol and drug use.

- Make time to unwind.

- Connect with friends and loved ones.

- Connect with your community- or faith-based organizations.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html

Atrium Health
Levine Children's

# School-Based Exposures

When someone in the school setting has COVID-19, may have COVID-19, or shows symptoms of COVID-19, quick action should be taken to reduce potential spread of the virus.

The guidance below serves as a general recommendation on how to handle these situations. It should not replace your school's existing action plan for managing symptomatic staff/students and individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19 at school.

## Symptomatic Staff/Students

Individuals who have a fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other **COVID-19 symptoms** may have coronavirus, and immediate action should be taken:

1. Call 911 if symptoms are life-threatening or severe.
2. Separate symptomatic individuals from others.
3. Gather their belongings.
4. Dismiss them from school/send them home.

Atrium Health
Levine Children's

# School-Based Exposures CONT.

Most cases of COVID-19 involve mild symptoms and can be safely managed at home. After they're home, individuals (or their parents if the individual is a student) should monitor symptoms. If symptoms worsen, the individual/parent should contact their primary care provider, call 704-468-8888 or visit **AtriumHealth.org/Coronavirus**.

If testing is needed, all Levine Children's pediatric practices will be able to test any child with flu-like symptoms for both flu and COVID-19 during your visit.  A rapid test will be available soon, with results in as little as 15 minutes.

## Staff/Students With COVID-Like Symptoms

Staff/students with COVID-like symptoms should stay out of school until the following have been satisfied:

### At least 24 hours have passed since:

✔ Their fever is gone without using any medicines, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil) or naproxen sodium (Aleve), to reduce it

✔ Their symptoms have improved

### AND

✔ At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared

A negative COVID-19 test result does not change the course of action recommended above. False negative test results can and do occur due to inferior test quality, a poorly administered test, or testing too early or too late when there aren't sufficient quantities of the virus to render a positive result.

Atrium Health
Levine Children's

# School-Based Exposures <span>CONT.</span>

## Identifying Close Contacts

Staff/students who have had "close contact" with an individual with a confirmed positive OR possible/suspected case of COVID-19 should be under surveillance. Therefore, it's important to understand what constitutes close contact so that you can appropriately identify any staff/students who may have been exposed.

### The CDC defines close contact as:

- Being within 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 for a cumulative total of 15 minutes over 24 hours starting from 2 days before the person with COVID-19 became sick (or for asymptomatic patients, 2 days before their test sample was collected).

## Managing Exposures

Staff/students who have been exposed to an individual who has a confirmed positive OR possible/suspected case of COVID-19 should:

- Stay home for 10 to 14 days* without testing depending on the quarantine requirements of local public health authorities. Start to count from the last day of contact with the confirmed/suspected positive individual.
- Limit the exposed person's contact with others in their house. Stay at least 6 feet away from others in their house.
- Watch for signs of COVID-19, such as fever, cough, shortness of breath or new loss of taste/smell. If the exposed person has any COVID-19 symptoms, they should isolate (stay away from others) in their home until:

  ✔ Their fever is gone without using any medicines to reduce it such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil) or naproxen sodium (Aleve)

  ✔ Their symptoms are have improved

  **AND**

  ✔ At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared

Atrium Health Levine Children's

# School-Based Exposures

## Managing Exposures Cont.

\* The CDC has provided 2 options to shorten the 14-day quarantine period following a COVID-19 exposure:

**Without Testing:** If the person doesn't develop symptoms, quarantine can end after day 10 without testing.

**With Testing:** If the person doesn't develop symptoms and they test negative for COVID-19, quarantine can end after day 7.

- The sample for the test should be collected and tested within 48 hours of the last day of quarantine, meaning no earlier than day 5. However, even with a negative test on day 5, the person should still quarantine for a full 7 days. If the test results don't come back by the end of 7 days, the person should quarantine until the results come back, or until day 10.

Per the CDC, local public health authorities determine the quarantine options for their jurisdictions, so check your local guidance to ensure you are aware of their quarantine requirements.

# Screening and Testing Solutions CONT.

As part of Atrium Health's COVID-Safe initiative, we're providing critical screening and testing solutions, as well as expert guidance and support, to help schools reopen as safely as possible. And our offerings can be customized based on your organization's unique needs.

### On-Site COVID-19 Testing

The N.C. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that individuals who have been in close contact with a known COVID-19-positive person should be tested following the exposure, regardless of symptoms. But when a COVID-19 exposure occurs at school, multiple employees and students may be affected, making it challenging for administrators to manage.

Atrium Health's On-Site COVID-19 Testing program removes from the school administration the burden of coordinating testing after an exposure by deploying a team of experienced healthcare professionals to the school's location. Through this program, staff or students who have been in close contact (within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes within a 24-hour period) with a COVID-19-positive person are eligible for testing 5 to 7 days after the exposure occurs.

On-Site COVID-19 Testing is also available for mitigation purposes and other organizational needs.

Schools can choose between two types of testing.

- Rapid Testing - results are expected within 15 minutes
- PCR Lab-Based Testing - results are expected within approximately 2 to 3 days

Following the event, schools will receive a comprehensive results report for all staff and students.

Results are available by text message and/or through the participant's **MyAtriumHealth** account. In addition, within 5 business days designated school officials will receive a comprehensive results report for all individuals tested.

*For more information about Atrium Health's COVID-Safe screening and testing solutions, email **K12COVID@AtriumHealth.org**.*

# Screening and Testing Solutions CONT.

### COVID-Safe Consulting

Maintaining a safe environment for teachers, staff members and students is always a top priority. However, it's even more important – and complex – due to COVID-19. That's why we're here to help. Our COVID-Safe consulting experts can help your school be as safe, smart and efficient as possible.

**Here's how COVID-Safe consulting works.**
During your on-site assessment, our clinical leader and client services manager will review the school's facilities to get a complete picture of its daily operations. After the assessment, you'll receive a comprehensive summary of findings that includes customized guidance on:

- Physical distancing in common areas such as classrooms, restrooms and cafeterias
- Cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces
- Circulation of foot traffic in narrow spaces such as stairwells and hallways
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) needs and proper use
- Hand hygiene management
- High-risk student identification and special accommodations
- Daily scheduling that supports physical distancing and contact tracing
- Screening teachers, staff and students on a regular basis
- Testing after COVID-19 exposures
- Industry-specific guidelines (as applicable)

*For more information about Atrium Health's COVID-Safe screening and testing solutions, email K12COVID@AtriumHealth.org.*

Atrium Health
Levine Children's

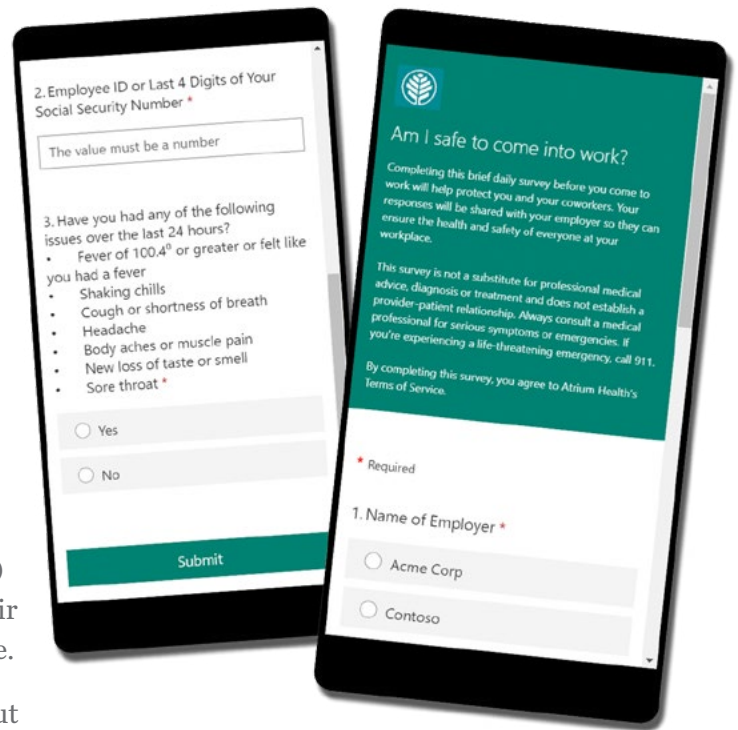# Screening and Testing Solutions CONT.

## Symptom Checker

Screening teachers, staff and students each day as they arrive at school, along with physical distancing and having them wear personal protective equipment (PPE) are recommended to protect your school from a COVID-19 exposure. Atrium Health is offering schools a symptom checker tool free of charge, which allows faculty to record the presence or absence of COVID-19 symptoms.

Getting started is easy. Simply provide a current eligibility file and the contact information for the individual(s) who will be checking results. The individual(s) checking results will be able to access their staff symptom checker results in real time.

Staff will fill out a brief digital survey about COVID-19 symptoms, such as fever, cough or shortness of breath, before coming into school each day. If they indicate that they're experiencing any of the symptoms listed, they'll be instructed to stay home. They'll also be instructed to get care if their symptoms worsen. If staff respond that they're not experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, they'll be notified that they're safe to go into school.

*For more information about Atrium Health's COVID-Safe screening and testing solutions, email K12COVID@AtriumHealth.org.*

# Screening and Testing Solutions CONT.

### School Exposure Management

Taking the proper precautions ahead of time is your best course of action to protect your students and staff from becoming infected. However, even with the best safeguards in place, it's possible that you will have a COVID-19 exposure. If that happens, Atrium Health is here to help.

To begin, Atrium Health will work with you to determine what level of exposure your staff and students have sustained. This will aid you in determining who should be removed from the school and quarantined at home.

After the **high-risk exposures/close contacts** have been identified, they'll be connected to the Atrium Health virtual observation unit. Using telemedicine, our specialized care team will remotely monitor your staff or students while they safely self-isolate in the comfort of their own home.

Diagnostic testing at one of Atrium Health's COVID-19 testing sites will be scheduled 5 to 7 days after the date of the last exposure. If someone develops symptoms, our care team will reach out to them and determine the appropriate course of action.

Patients can access their results by text and/or through **MyAtriumHealth** as part of their online health record. Those with positive results will be enrolled into Atrium Health Hospital at Home and will receive a follow-up phone call from a nurse who is assigned to provide the care they need for recovery.

With Atrium Health's Exposure Management program, you can rest assured that your staff and students will receive the best care possible.

*For more information about Atrium Health's COVID-Safe screening and testing solutions, email **K12COVID@AtriumHealth.org**.*

# Resources

Our response to the COVID-19 pandemic is constantly evolving as we continue to learn more about the virus. For the latest recommendations, please refer to the following resources for K–12 schools:

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

- **North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services**

- **South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control**

- **Georgia Department of Public Health**

- **Atrium Health Education Resource Center:** Stay up-to-date with the latest COVID-19 school specific-information by visiting our **online resource center**.

Atrium Health
Levine Children's

K12COVID@AtriumHealth.org

AtriumHealth.org/Schools