

Newburyport Public Schools

2021-2022 Health and Safety Protocols

Overview

The Newburyport Public Schools (NPS) has worked closely with the Newburyport Board of Health and our Medical Advisory Team to understand the recommendations and guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education ([DESE](#)), [Massachusetts State](#) Department of Public Health (DPH), and [CDC](#).

Decisions about NPS safety protocols are made with consideration of our local metrics (e.g. student and staff vaccination rates, City of Newburyport positivity rates) and in line with state and federal guidance. The NPS Medical Advisory Team meets regularly to review local data and respond to any changing regulations. We will continue to monitor local health data and respond with changes in protocols when needed.

Mask Policies

Students and Staff	
PK-grade 8	Masks required indoors Masks optional outdoors Masks required on buses
Grade 9-12	Masks required indoors Masks optional outdoors Masks required on buses

COVID Testing Options

NPS offers an in-school COVID-19 testing program. This program has two components:

1. **Symptomatic Testing** for students who show symptoms of COVID-19 at school and
2. **Test and Stay** for students who may have been exposed while in school but are not showing symptoms.

To participate in the testing program, students must have a [completed consent form](#). Each of these tests is a quick, non-invasive nasal swab that is collected under the supervision of a school nurse or trained health provider. Below are descriptions of how each test is conducted, and what they are used for.

- **Symptomatic Testing:** Students should not come to school if they are feeling sick while at home, however, if a student develops symptoms in school then **Symptomatic Testing** could be used. This is a rapid test (results are ready within 15 minutes). If a student has minimal symptoms and tests negative, they may be able to remain in school. School nurses will make this determination.

- **Test and Stay:** This process allows students who have had close contact (*while at school*) with a person who tested positive for COVID-19 to stay in school if they are not showing symptoms. Instead of needing to quarantine and miss school, these students will take a daily rapid test and remain in school as long as they are not symptomatic. Students participate in Test and Stay for at least five days after they may have been exposed.

Contact Tracing and Quarantine Protocols

We will continue to monitor positive cases in the schools. Please see the [DESE revised guidance for contact tracing](#) and definition of a close contact.¹

Students and staff are asked to monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms:

- Fever (100.0° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- New loss of taste or smell
- Muscle aches or body aches
- Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- Sore throat, when in combination with other symptoms
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea when in combination with other symptoms
- Headache when in combination with other symptoms
- Fatigue, when in combination with other symptoms
- Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) when in combination with other symptoms

All students and staff are asked to stay home if they are sick. Parents/Guardians can expect a daily email reminding them of the symptoms so students can do a self-check.

¹ DESE Definition of a close contact

Close contacts are defined as individuals who have been within 6 feet of a COVID-19 positive individual while indoors, for at least 15 minutes during a 24-hour period. Please note that the at-risk exposure time begins 48 hours prior to symptom onset (or time of positive test if asymptomatic) and continues until the time the COVID-19 positive individual is isolated.

The following close contacts are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols:

- **Asymptomatic, fully vaccinated close contacts:** Individuals who are asymptomatic and fully vaccinated are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.
- **Classroom close contacts:** An individual who is exposed to a COVID-19 positive individual in the classroom while both individuals were masked, so long as the individuals were spaced at least 3 feet apart, is exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.
- **Bus close contacts:** Individuals on buses must be masked according to federal requirements. As such, individuals who are masked on buses when windows are open are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.
- **Close contacts who have had COVID-19 within the past 90 days:** An individual who has been previously diagnosed with COVID-19 and then becomes a close contact of someone with COVID-19 is exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols if: (1) the exposure occurred within 90 days of the onset of their own illness AND (2) the exposed individual is recovered and remains without COVID-19 symptoms.

Please notify your child’s school nurse if your child or a family member tests positive for COVID-19.

Based on the recommendation of [DESE](#), the following quarantine/isolation protocols will be used:

Situation	Recommended Action
Positive case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Isolate for 10 days ● Return to school once they have been: (1) without fever for 24 hours (and without taking fever-reducing medications) AND (2) experienced improvement in other symptoms
Close contact not vaccinated no symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quarantine for 7 days from date of exposure OR ● Test and Stay for contact while in school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students who are signed up for the testing program and are asymptomatic can take a rapid antigen test on each school day during the 7 day period. ○ They must receive a negative result, wear masks in school at all times (other than when eating or drinking), and remain symptom-free.
Close contact vaccinated no symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quarantine not required <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DESE: “asymptomatic, fully vaccinated individuals are exempt from close contact testing and quarantine response protocols”
Close contact (had COVID within 90 days, no symptoms)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quarantine not required
Symptomatic Person (applies to vaccinated and not vaccinated)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Isolation duration is based on symptoms ● Student may return to school post-symptoms (fever free without medications for 24 hours) with a negative PCR COVID-19 test ● For students with symptoms (who are not close contacts) who choose not to take a PCR test, isolation is at least 10 days from symptom onset

Vaccination Information

We encourage all eligible students and staff to get vaccinated. According to the [CDC](#) “Vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Promoting vaccinations can help schools safely return to in-person learning as well as extracurricular activities and sports.”

The COVID-19 vaccination is free and available for all people age 12 and older. For information on local vaccination options, see the [Mass.gov vaccination site](#).

Other In-School Mitigation Strategies

The CDC, Mass Department of Public Health and DESE continue to recognize the importance of using a number of prevention strategies. In addition to masking and providing in-district testing options, our schools will implement the following strategies:

- **Hand Hygiene**--our students and staff will continue to have access to hand sanitizer throughout the buildings. Students will also be provided opportunities for frequent handwashing.
- **Distancing**--Because students will be masked, we will be able to use all our spaces and furniture. We will follow DESE guidance and provide distance for students when possible. We will maximize our space in all eating areas and limit mask-off time as recommended by DESE. Each principal will share detailed plans in their back-to-school communications.
- **Ventilation and air circulation**--all our buildings and classrooms meet ventilation and air quality recommendations from both DESE and the CDC.
- **Cleaning**--NPS uses hypochlorous acid (HOCL), one of the top 5 EPA coronavirus disinfectants. HOCL is environmentally friendly, non-toxic, and non-corrosive. All schools in Newburyport use sprayers/foggers in open areas and large spaces. Additionally, teachers, instructional assistants, and office staff are provided with a spray version of HOCL disinfectant (*Force of Nature*) to easily disinfect high touch surfaces and areas in their immediate vicinity. Restrooms are cleaned and disinfected once during the day while the building is occupied and again in the evening. Classrooms, offices, common areas and other spaces are cleaned daily. Essentially, we are “deep cleaning” every day.