

This document is a new chapter that will be incorporated into the [Communicable Disease Reference Guide for Schools](#) currently being revised for 2022.

Clinical Description:

SARS-CoV-2 is a novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, a contagious respiratory disease that spreads rapidly. COVID-19 can present with no symptoms (asymptomatic) in some individuals, while causing mild to severe illness and even death in others.

Signs and Symptoms:

Symptoms vary and this list is not inclusive, but common symptoms of illness include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Incubation Period:

The incubation period ranges from 2-14 days.

Mode of Transmission

The principal mode by which people are infected with COVID-19 is through exposure to respiratory fluids carrying infectious virus. Respiratory droplets are produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, breathes, sings, or talks. Exposure occurs in the following ways:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within 6 feet)
- Through inhalation of very fine respiratory droplets and aerosol particles
- Contact with respiratory droplets and particles on exposed mucous membranes in the mouth, nose, or eye by direct splashes and sprays
- Touching mucous membranes with hands that have been soiled either directly by virus-containing respiratory fluids or indirectly by touching surfaces with virus on them
- Under certain circumstances (such as when people are in enclosed spaces with poor ventilation) COVID-19 may be spread by airborne transmission
- COVID-19 spreads less commonly through contact with contaminated surfaces

Prevention Measures – See [CDC guidance for COVID-19](#) for the most up to date information regarding the virus.

- **Get vaccinated**
 - Being fully vaccinated and remaining up to date when additional vaccine doses become available offers the best protection from serious illness or death even if someone is infected with COVID-19.
 - Follow current [CDC guidance](#) for most current recommendations for COVID-19 vaccination.

- **Masks**
 - Masks can be used as a mitigation strategy when COVID transmission is likely to occur in congregate settings or when ongoing transmission is present. Masks may help prevent you from getting or spreading the virus.
- **Avoid close contact**
 - CDC recommends at least 6 feet between yourself and others. A mask is not a substitute for personal distancing.
 - Avoid crowds — especially indoors — during times of substantial or high transmission in your community
- **Isolate if you test positive**
 - Follow [CDC guidance](#) if you test positive, especially how to isolate and when you can complete your isolation. Contact your healthcare provider for guidance or if your symptoms worsen.
- **Wash your hands**
 - **Use soap and water for at least 20 seconds** especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, **use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol**. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
 - **Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth** with unwashed hands.
 - **Wash your hands frequently, especially after contact with high-touch surfaces.**
- **Monitor your health daily**
 - Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or [other symptoms](#) of COVID-19 throughout the day.
 - Encourage students and staff to check for symptoms before coming to school. If symptoms develop, isolate, and get tested right away.
 - Stay home and away from others until results are available.
 - Follow [CDC guidance](#) if you test positive, especially how to isolate and when you can complete your isolation.
 - Contact your healthcare provider for guidance or if your symptoms worsen.
- **Clean:** Teach students how to properly wash hands and use hand sanitizer. Ensure that soap, water, and towels/hand driers are available. Hand sanitizer should be readily available, especially when hand washing is not feasible. Monitor handwashing for effectiveness in younger groups to ensure handwashing is sufficient.
- **Cover:** Sneeze into one's elbow or upper sleeve or use a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Immediately discard the used tissue in the wastebasket and wash hands.
- **Contain:** Stay home if you are not feeling well and don't attend school, work, extracurricular events, or social activities. Routinely clean surfaces and objects according to your internal procedures. Disinfect surfaces and objects as needed. A link to cleaning and disinfection can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html#home>



Isolation

Isolation of the individual should be based on the current CDC guidance and local and state health department recommendations. Please review most recent quarantine and isolation recommendations on the CDC website at [cdc.gov/coronavirus/](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/) and the IDOH website at [coronavirus.in.gov](https://www.in.gov/coronavirus) when you are reviewing these references. Documentation of immunization should be available in the Children and Hoosier Immunization Registry Program (CHIRP) for all students and adults who are fully vaccinated and boosted.

Outbreaks

According to the IDOH Communicable Disease Reporting Rule (410 IAC 1-2.5-54), an outbreak is defined as the number of cases or percentage of illness of disease occurring in a community, region or population that exceeds what is normally expected. In a school setting, this may be overall cases in a school or excessive cases within a classroom or activity group. During an outbreak, schools in collaboration with their local health department (LHD) may determine mitigation strategies to control spread of illness.

All COVID-19 outbreaks shall be reported immediately to the local health department (LHD) and investigated through the standard communicable disease reporting process. Schools should assist their LHD with exposure notification when there is a cluster of positive COVID-19 cases or an outbreak. Schools should notify their LHD immediately when absenteeism reaches **10 percent** for COVID-19 or COVID-like illnesses or anytime schools are concerned about the level or unusual occurrence of any disease.

For additional information and recommendations regarding the preparation for and the management of an outbreak situation in a school setting, see Appendix A, "Managing an Infectious Disease Outbreak in a School Setting."

Reporting School Absenteeism

See Appendix D, "Reporting of Excessive Absenteeism," for guidelines on reporting school absenteeism greater than or equal to 20% to the LHD and to the IDOE School Attendance Officer. Reporting to the IDOE School Attendance Officer can be completely electronic at <https://form.jotform.com/43019024274952>

For a list of Local Health Departments (LHDs) - <https://www.in.gov/health/health-and-human-services/local-health-department-outreach-division/local-health-department-information/>

Other Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention websites:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/toolkits/schools.html>



- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/testing.html>

Indiana Department of Health COVID-19 websites:

- <https://coronavirus.in.gov>
- Public Resources: <https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/2400.htm>

