

## Montgomery County Office of Public Health (MCOPH) Mask to Stay (MTS) Guidance for K-12 School Entities

**Mask to Stay guidance ONLY applies to the following individuals: MTS is ONLY for students and staff who are not up to date with vaccination or are unvaccinated, and who were exposed to COVID-19 in school or in the community.**

**This does not include household exposures.**

MCOPH recommends Mask to Stay (MTS) as one of several tools in a layered strategy to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

MTS allows staff and students who are exposed to COVID-19 in school or in the community, who are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated and are asymptomatic to continue to attend school. Individuals who are participating in MTS required are required to wear a mask at all times when around other people for ten days after the date of exposure, and must agree to one antigen testing between days 4-6 of quarantine. . If an individual cannot wear a [well-fitted](#) mask at all times during that 10 day time period, the exposed individual cannot participate in MTS and must complete standard quarantine.

MTS applies to Covid-19 exposures that occur in and outside the school setting but does **not** include household exposures. Staff members who have completed their primary series of recommended vaccines, but have not received a recommended booster shot when eligible and have had a household exposure may participate in [MCOPH Test to Stay](#). Staff members who have had a household exposure but are up to date with vaccination do not need to quarantine after exposure.

<p><b>Promotion of COVID-19 Vaccinations</b></p>	<p>A <a href="#">growing body of evidence</a> suggests that people who have completed the <a href="#">primary series</a> (and a <a href="#">booster</a> when eligible) are at substantially reduced risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 compared with people who are not vaccinated.</p> <p>Schools can <a href="#">promote vaccinations</a> among teachers, staff, families, and eligible students by providing information about COVID-19 vaccination, encouraging vaccine trust and confidence, and establishing supportive policies and practices that make getting vaccinated as easy and convenient as possible.</p>
<p><b>Definitions</b></p>	<p><b>Isolation:</b> Separation of an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection from those who are not infected. At this time MCOPH follows requirements for isolation provided by the Center for Disease Control (CDC): <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html">https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html</a></p>

	<p><b>Standard Quarantine:</b> Quarantine is used to keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. Quarantine helps prevent the spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are sick or if they are infected with the virus without feeling symptoms. People in quarantine should stay home, separate themselves from others, and monitor their health. MCOPH follows requirements for quarantine provided by CDC: <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html">https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html</a></p> <p>Following CDC guidance MCOPH requires the following individuals to quarantine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals age 18 or older who have completed the <a href="#">primary series</a> of recommended vaccine, but have not received a <a href="#">recommended</a> booster shot when eligible.</li> <li>• Individuals who have received the single-dose Johnson &amp; Johnson vaccine (completing the primary series), but have not received a <a href="#">recommended</a> booster shot when eligible.</li> <li>• Individuals who are not vaccinated or have not completed a <a href="#">primary vaccine series</a>.</li> </ul> <p>For more information on when individuals are to date with COVID-19 vaccination, visit <a href="#">CDC Stay Up to Date with Your Vaccines</a></p> <p><b>Close Contact:</b> Individuals within 6 feet of a COVID-19 case for 15 consecutive minutes.  <i>Exemption:</i> In the K-12 indoor classroom setting or a structured outdoor setting where mask use can be observed, the close contact definition excludes students only who were between 3 to 6 feet away from an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or clinically compatible illness where both students were engaged in consistent and correct use of well-fitting masks).</p> <p>For Isolation, Quarantine, and Close Contact see <a href="#">MCOPH COVID-19 School Exclusion Chart</a>.</p>
<p><b>Student/ Staff Eligibility Requirements</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual(s) identified as a close contact to an individual who is positive for COVID-19. This does not include close contacts exposed at home.</li> <li>• Individual(s) who meet the requirement for those who need to quarantine (<i>see above</i>).</li> <li>• Individual is asymptomatic (without any signs or symptoms of COVID-19).</li> <li>• Masks must be worn at all times when around other people. An individual who has a mask exemption will not qualify for MTS and will have to complete standard COVID-19 quarantine. For MTS a face shield is not acceptable.</li> <li>• Individual consents to receive and participate in antigen testing provided in accordance MTS antigen testing cadence.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Antigen Testing Cadence</b></p>	<p>Individuals are required to participate in one antigen test <b>between days 4 through 6 after exposure</b>. If school is not in session on days 4 through 6, one antigen test should be obtained the next school day or prior to the end of quarantine (day 10).</p>

	<p><b>The individual will no longer be able to participate in MTS if the individual tests positive, becomes symptomatic, or has household exposure. These individuals should immediately be sent home and follow isolation and quarantine guidelines.</b></p>
<p><b>Consistent and Correct Masking Use</b></p>	<p>COVID-19 is transmitted predominantly by inhalation of respiratory droplets generated when people cough, sneeze, sing, talk, or breathe. Masks are primarily intended to reduce the emission of virus-laden droplets (“source control”), which is especially relevant for asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic infected wearers who feel well and may be unaware of their infectiousness to others, and who are estimated to account for more than 50% of transmissions. Masks also help reduce inhalation of these droplets by the wearer.</p> <p>Mask must be worn at all times around other people, even while participating in extracurricular activities and sports. If masks <b>cannot</b> be worn, individuals cannot participate in those extracurricular activities for ten days from the last day of exposure.</p> <p>Mask can be removed briefly for eating and drinking. When masks are removed, 6 feet of physical distancing should be observed, <i>if feasible</i>.</p>
<p><b>Enhanced Symptom Screening</b></p>	<p>Increase active symptom screening for individuals participating in MTS by school and parents/guardians. Individuals are encouraged to monitor for symptoms daily to identify if an individual develops signs of illness.</p> <p>If an individual in MTS develops COVID-like symptoms according to CDC’s guidelines they should be immediately isolated. The individual will no longer be able to participate in MTS and should complete the standard quarantine to help support reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19.</p>
<p><b>Extra-Curricular Activities</b></p>	<p>Masks must be worn at all times during extracurricular activities to participate in MTS. If masks cannot be worn during rigorous exertion activities, the exposed individual(s) cannot participate until after ten days from the exposure.</p>
<p><b>Quarantine Outside of the School Setting</b></p>	<p>Individuals who participate in MTS are required to complete standard quarantine (as described above) outside of the school setting. Individuals can stay in school and participate in extra-curricular activities through MTS.</p>
<p><b>Internal Tracking System</b></p>	<p>All schools/districts should follow MCOPH standards for reporting positive cases and/or close contacts to our office. Schools/Districts should be prepared to provide MCOPH with additional information pertaining to participants in the MTS or TTS program if requested.</p>

References:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention, COVID-19 Community Levels, Updated February 25, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/community-levels.html>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Quarantine and Isolation, Updated January 27, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention, What We Know About Quarantine and Isolation, Updated February 25, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine-isolation-background.html>

Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 for School Administrators, Testing and Screening, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Updated January 13, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/admin-faq.html>

Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention K-12 Schools, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Updated January 13, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

Science Brief: Community Use of Cloth Masks to Control the Spread of SARS-CoV-2, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Updated December 6, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/masking-science-sars-cov2.html>

Scientific Brief: SARS-CoV-2 Transmission, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Updated May 7, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/sars-cov-2-transmission.html>