

# FAQs



September 12, 2020

## STAYING HOME, RETURNING TO SCHOOL

This information does not take the place of qualified medical advice but is an effort to provide a summary of the health department guidelines regarding COVID-19 and our schools' policies regarding school attendance. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact your child's pediatrician or family physician.

### When should I keep my child home from school?

On page 2 of the [Grand Traverse County Health Department Return to School Toolkit](#), you will find helpful screening guidelines. In summary, keep your child at home if that **student** has **ANY** of the following symptoms (new/different/worse from baseline of any chronic illness):

- Temperature 100.4° or signs of fever (chills/sweating)
- Sore throat
- New uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing
- Diarrhea, vomiting, or abdominal pain
- New onset of severe headache

If just one of your children has one of the above symptoms, you do not need to keep that child's other siblings at home *unless* you suspect the first child has COVID-19 (because of the presence of multiple symptoms or because of exposure to COVID, travel, etc.) In that case, or in the event that the original child tests positive, the sibling will be considered a "close contact" and must follow the protocol for quarantine.

### What is a "close contact?"

A close contact is defined as:

- a. Being **within** approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for **15 minutes**.
- b. Having direct contact with infectious secretions of COVID-19 (e.g., being coughed on).

Here are some examples of close contact:

- Caring for, living with or visiting someone who has COVID-19.
- Being near someone with COVID-19 in a confined space if that person is not wearing a mask.
- Being coughed or sneezed on by someone who has COVID-19.

### When can my child return to school?

If your child does not develop other symptoms and has not been exposed to COVID-19 or traveled to areas of high risk, they can return to school based on the guidelines for their symptoms:

- Fever: at least 24 hours have passed with no fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications (Tylenol, Ibuprofen, etc.)
- Sore throat: improvement (if strep throat: do not return until at least 2 doses of antibiotic have been taken);
- Cough/shortness of breath: improvement

- Diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain: no diarrhea or vomiting for 24 hours
- Severe headache: improvement

## FOR COVID-IMPACTED FAMILIES

### **If we have COVID in our household, who do we tell?**

When a family member tests positive or is presumed positive, report the illness and absence to your building’s secretary/attendance officer. She will alert the principal who will disseminate the information confidentially to those who need to know. If you have already notified the Health Department, please share with the school anything that they have told you about quarantine periods, expected date of return to school, etc.

Immaculate Conception	Nikki Kleinrichert	<a href="mailto:icoffice@gtacs.org">icoffice@gtacs.org</a>	947-1252
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton	Melissa Lundberg	<a href="mailto:mlundberg@gtacs.org">mlundberg@gtacs.org</a>	932-4810
St. Francis	MaryLou Middleton	<a href="mailto:mmiddleton@gtacs.org">mmiddleton@gtacs.org</a>	946-8038

### **If I respond to the COVID symptom survey via RenWeb, do I still need to report the absence?**

Yes, the daily COVID symptom survey’s primary purpose is to keep symptoms top of mind. If your student answers yes to symptoms, please call your building attendance officer with additional information and to report the absence so that teachers may be notified.

### **What information does the school provide the Health Department?**

If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, the school will provide class rosters, seating charts, lunch schedules, etc., to aid with contact tracing.

### **Can a child who has been isolated remain in school?**

If family members can completely isolate from COVID-positive persons, they may avoid being deemed “close contacts.” This requires a very high degree of vigilance because isolated persons must not come in contact with the infected person.

## RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER COVID











The school does not require COVID-19 testing, nor does a negative test necessarily expedite a student’s return to school. Here is a summary of the health department guidelines:

- **Positive or presumed positive**  
Exclude from school for 10 days since first symptoms and 24 hours with no fever and improvement of symptoms
- **Symptoms and test results are pending**  
Exclude from school until results available – if negative, see conditions for return based on symptoms
- **Symptoms and no test**  
If student has had an exposure risk (close contact/travel history), no school for 10 days since first symptoms and 24 hours with no fever and improvement of symptoms  
  
If student has had NO exposure risk, refer to the conditions for return based on symptoms
- **Exposure risk**  
Students/staff who have been in close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case must quarantine for 14 days since last date of close contact.

## CONTINUITY OF LEARNING

### How can we increase our chances of staying in school?

Public health officials have increased their emphasis on mask wearing in recent weeks. Because of that shift, we are encouraging mask use as much as possible. While masks do not guarantee protection from the virus nor make students entirely immune from the need to quarantine, they do increase our chances of remaining in school.

Chance of Transmission	Asymptomatic COVID-19 Carrier	Uninfected Person
HIGHEST		
HIGH		
MEDIUM		
LOW		
LOWEST		

← 6 ft →

Source: Grand Traverse County Health Department

When a student or teacher in our community has COVID-19, the Health Department conducts contact tracing. In classrooms where teachers and students are not wearing masks, the odds of an entire classroom being quarantined are higher. As you can imagine, once that tracing is followed through to other employees, students, and siblings, the number of quarantined individuals could be crippling. Contrast that to a classroom that has the same diagnosis, but is masked, and the number of quarantined people may be only those who have had "close contact" with the person with a positive diagnosis. The Health Departments have governmental authority on these issues and the school and our families, by law, must adhere to their directives.

We do expect students to take mask breaks as directed by their teachers or as their personal needs require. Students who choose not to wear masks while seated in the classroom may do so and will not be penalized.

(Due to their developmental phase, preschoolers wear masks only when traveling outside their classroom.)

## SHARED TIME CLASSROOMS

### What are the mask protocols in TCAPS shared time classrooms?

Due to our shared time arrangement with Traverse City Area Public Schools (TCAPS), we are required to follow that school system's COVID-19 protocols in those classrooms. Examples include K-12 gym, foreign languages, art, and music. In TCAPS classrooms, face coverings must be worn at all times except when eating, when class is outdoors and socially distanced, during recess, or when the teacher has given a "mask break." The only exception is medical necessity with physician documentation; however, if you have specific concerns or want your child to abstain from aerobic activity while masks are required, please let your child's teacher know.