Teachers and Staff Resuming In-Person Learning

As a teacher or school staff member, you play a vital role in creating supportive and healthy environments in which students can learn and thrive. As your school resumes in-person learning during the COVID-19 pandemic – whether for the first time or following an outbreak – this page can help you identify ways to protect your own health, as well as the health of students in your classroom.

1. Prepare yourself and your family for in-person learning

Know your risk:

Are you or is someone you live with at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19? Risk increases with age and for people with certain underlying medical conditions. More detailed information about the conditions linked to increased risk is available on CDC's website.

Do you know how to protect yourself? Make a plan for how you can protect yourself and others while at school, such as:

- Covering your mouth and nose with a mask; and
- Practicing proper hand washing techniques at home and at school, especially before and after eating, sneezing, coughing, adjusting a mask, touching shared objects, and both before and after restroom use; and
- Minimizing close contact with people outside your household and anyone in your household who has or may have COVID-19.

Do you have health concerns about resuming in-person instruction? If so, consult with your health care provider(s) and speak with your school administrators about any options outside of in-person learning you may have (e.g., virtual teaching, extended sick/leave policies, etc.).

Know what to look for:

Are you familiar with the symptoms of COVID-19? If you or someone you live with experiences any of these symptoms that indicate possible illness, you should not go to school. Stay home and monitor your symptoms. You can use CDC's COVID-19 self-checker to help make a decision about whether to seek testing or medical care.

Do you know what it means to have close contact or a potential exposure to someone with COVID-19? A close contact is someone you were within 6 feet of for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period who has tested positive for COVID-19, regardless of whether either of you were wearing a mask.*

> *Although the mask helps prevent a close contact from spreading the virus to you by keeping respiratory droplets contained, it does not guarantee protection.*

If you have had a close contact, you should contact your school administration and follow your school's procedures for what to do if you may have been exposed. CDC recommends that those who have had close contact with someone who has COVID-19 stay home for 14 days after your last contact with that person, stay away from others, and monitor for COVID-19 symptoms.

Do you know about COVID-19 testing and where you can go to get tested for COVID-19 in the event that you or someone in your household develops symptoms? Check with your healthcare provider or local public health department to see if there are any sites that offer free testing or sites that prioritize testing for teachers and staff.

Know when you are feeling overwhelmed and whom to reach out to for help. Be familiar with CDC's *Stress and Coping During the COVID-19 Pandemic* webpage. Identify whom to reach out to (e.g., school administrators or employee assistance programs [EAP]) within your district for additional support if you are feeling stressed, anxious, or overwhelmed.

cdc.gov/coronavirus

2. Prepare your students and classroom for in-person learning

Adapt classroom strategies to promote behaviors to reduce spread:

Are you and your students required to wear masks at school? CDC recommends that students, teachers, and staff wear a mask with two or more layers to help protect yourself and others from COVID-19. Check your school's policy for using masks, and know when to wear a mask at school. If masks are encouraged or required, consider the following:

Identify who is responsible for supplying cloth masks– families, teachers, or the school;

- Collaborate with school and district leadership to plan for how to respond to students who do not have a mask or choose not to wear one;
- Plan for how to encourage students to wear masks correctly; and
- Whether you should wear a clear mask to support students who are deaf, hard of hearing, learning to read, learning to speak English, or those with other special needs.
- Masks should not be placed on children younger than 2 years old, anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, or anyone unable to remove the mask without assistance. Appropriate and consistent use may be challenging for younger students, individuals with severe asthma or breathing difficulties, or those with special educational or healthcare needs.

Are there ways you can promote social distancing during classroom instruction or during classroom transitions? Consider specific teaching methods, activities, and procedures that allow students to remain at least 6 feet apart, while still engaging and interacting with one another.

Do you have the supplies you need to support hand hygiene and sneeze and cough etiquette? You and your students should be able to practice frequent hand washing and respiratory etiquette (e.g., covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue) when resuming in-person learning. Consider the following:

- Identify who is responsible for supplying classroom supplies (e.g., soap, paper towels, facial tissues, touch-less trash cans, hand sanitizer, etc.);
- Plan for how to restock supplies when they are running low, including who will you need to contact;
- Plan to support hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette through instructional materials (e.g., lessons, printed posters, videos); and
- Identify key times to promote hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette among students in your classroom, and ensure students have access to necessary supplies during these times.

Adapt classroom procedures to maintain healthy environments and operations:

Are you able to modify your classroom layout to space students at least 6 feet apart? Discuss options with your school administrators – they may already have a plan in place. Arrange desks so that they are at least six feet apart and facing the same direction. If classroom space is limited, consider the following:

- Remove extra furniture to allow for more desk spacing;
- If students typically sit at tables in groups, space tables at least 6 feet apart and keep students in the same group throughout the school year;
- Add floor tape, signs, or other visual cues to keep students distanced while in the classroom;
- Optimize educational technology to provide resources to students and for the submission and grading of student work to limit the transfer of papers and other materials among you and your students; and
- Explore options for holding class outdoors or in larger unused spaces (e.g., auditoriums, libraries, convention centers, other available safe spaces in the community).

Can you reduce the use of communal/shared objects? Identify frequently touched or shared objects in the classroom (e.g., books, technology, supplies) and consider ways to limit their use, or increase cleaning and disinfecting between each use.

Can you increase circulation of outdoor air? When weather and air quality conditions allow, check with school administrators about increasing fresh outdoor air by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk for students (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms).

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Do you know who is responsible for [cleaning and disinfecting](#) your classroom? Determine when and what spaces, surfaces, and objects will be cleaned and disinfected in the school, and whether any additional training will be provided to staff who are responsible for cleaning and disinfection.

Have you asked administrators about any new procedures to maintain healthy environments and operations in communal spaces (e.g., restrooms, cafeterias, playgrounds) in your school? Ensure that there are policies and practices that promote [social distancing](#) of at least 6 feet during student drop-off/arrival, classroom and hallway transitions, and in common spaces. Visual cues such as floor tape, signs, or physical barriers may support students and staff in practicing key [everyday preventive behaviors.](#)

Plan for if a student gets sick:

Do you know [what to do](#) if a student in your classroom has COVID-19 symptoms? Identify who you should contact at your school, and check whether there are any school policies related to this scenario (e.g., a place for the student to isolate from others, classroom shifts to temporary online instruction).

Do you know your school's protocols if a student in your classroom has a positive COVID-19 test result? Know who at your school is responsible for contacting the [local health department](#) and understand your role in potential contact tracing and case investigation. Consider the following to support their efforts:

- Collaborate with school administrators to create a daily classroom map or seating chart so that you can readily identify who was within 6 feet of the student for more than 15 cumulative minutes within a 24-hour period; and
- Know your school's protocols for contacting parents, caregivers, and guardians of other students in your class following the positive COVID-19 test result

If you and students have to quarantine, are you expected to continue instruction online? Check with your school about policies for temporarily resuming remote learning following a COVID-19 case in your classroom, and whether extra planning time or technical support will be available.