

COVID-19 Guidance for Families with Children in Child Care

This guidance is based on the ChildCareStrongNC Public Health Toolkit from the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS): <https://files.nc.gov/covid/documents/childcare/NC-Interim-Guidance-for-Child-Care-Settings.pdf>

Anyone who has COVID-19, symptoms of COVID-19, or who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 should not go to child care. Monitor yourself and your child(ren) carefully and keep your child(ren) home if anyone in the household has symptoms. Share **any symptoms** with the facility.

Symptoms of COVID-19

After a person is exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19, symptoms may appear **2-14 days later**. Symptoms can be very mild or severe and include:

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| • Fever* † | • Fatigue | • Nausea or vomiting |
| • Chills* | • Muscle or body aches | • Diarrhea |
| • New cough* | • Headache | This list does not include all possible symptoms and it may change as new information is discovered. |
| • New loss of taste or smell* | • Sore throat | |
| • Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing* | • Congestion or runny nose | |

*Any person who has one or more of these symptoms must be excluded.

†Fever is a temperature of 100.4 or higher or symptoms like flushed cheeks, fatigue, extreme fussiness, chills, shivering, sweating, achiness, headache, or not eating or drinking.

Daily Health Screening and Exclusion for COVID-19

Child care staff are required to ask each person dropping children off the following questions every day:

Have any of the children who you are dropping off:	
1. Been diagnosed with COVID-19 since they were last at child care?	If yes, the child(ren) and any household members may not enter
2. Had a fever, chills, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, new cough or new loss of taste or smell since they were last at child care?	If yes, the child(ren) and any household members may not enter
3. Had close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 in the last 14 days? Close contact means that a person has been within 6 feet of someone for a total of 15 minutes over 24 hours. The 15 minutes is a total amount of time throughout the day. For example, 5 minutes at a time three times during the day.	If yes, the child(ren) may not enter
4. Has any health department or a health care provider been in contact with you and advised you to quarantine your child?	If yes, the child(ren) may not enter

Staff may also:

- Look for symptoms such as flushed cheeks, increased skin temperature, and/or take the child’s temperature.
- Look for and ask questions about signs of other illnesses, injuries, or changes in mood or behavior.

While COVID-19 is one reason children are excluded from care, the NC Child Care Rules includes a list of the other illnesses that children must be excluded for. A child care program may also have its own policy on exclusion.

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Keeping Children Safe in Child Care, Expectations of Families:

Practice social distancing: Maintain 6 feet of distance between your family and other parents/staff at all times and especially during drop off and arrival.

- Do not enter the building if possible. Instead, allow a staff member to greet children outside.
- **Breastfeeding mothers** may enter the facility to feed a child in the designated breastfeeding space.

Face coverings are:

- **recommended** for anyone above the age of two.
- **required** for anyone ages 5 and over.

Face coverings are required to be properly worn:

- indoors when you are around anyone who does not live in your household.
- outside where physical distancing of six feet is not possible.

Exceptions to the face-covering requirement include any person who has trouble breathing, is unconscious or incapacitated, or is otherwise unable to put on or remove the face covering without assistance. Review the [NC Executive Orders](#) for the most current state requirements.

What to Do/Expect if my Child is Excluded from Child Care?

If your child is excluded because **the answer is yes to any of the screening questions:**

- They should go home. It is important they stay home and away from other people. Staying away from others helps stop the spread of COVID-19.
- If your child has COVID-19 symptoms,
 - contact your child's health care provider.
 - consider having your child tested right away.
- If your child was exposed to someone with COVID-19 but does not have symptoms there is no need to have the child tested immediately.
 - If you want to have your child tested, wait until 5 days from the last known exposure for an accurate result.
 - A negative test after exposure will not allow the child to return to child care earlier because they may become sick at any time during quarantine period.

A child who has been exposed to COVID-19 may be excluded for longer than a child who has COVID. See isolation and quarantine information below for details.

Returning to Child Care After Isolation

Isolation means people must stay home, away from others to avoid spreading COVID-19 if they have:

- symptoms of COVID-19 or
- tested positive for COVID-19 with or without symptoms.

Usually people in isolation **with COVID-19 symptoms** can be around other people when:

- it has been at least 10 days from the first day of symptoms **and**
- it has been at least 24 hours since they had a fever (without fever-reducing medication) **and**
- their COVID-19 symptoms are improving.

If a person has tested positive but **has no symptoms**, they can be around other people

- 10 days after their positive test was taken.

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After 10 days, most people who have had COVID-19 are no longer contagious. Some people who are severely ill or have a weakened immune system may be contagious longer than 10 days. **Follow the guidance from a health care provider or the local health department on when to end isolation.**

Going Back Earlier

Children excluded for symptoms of COVID-19 can **return earlier than 10 days if one of the following is true:**

- they test negative for COVID-19 and they:
 - have felt well for 24 hours and
 - have not had a fever for 24 hours (without fever-reducing medication) and
 - do not live with other people that have symptoms.
- they have visited a health care provider who says
 - COVID-19 testing is not needed for the child to return to child care AND
 - confirm that the child's symptoms are due to another illness.

Types of Tests

There are two types of COVID-19 tests, often taken with a swab to the nose or throat:

- **PCR tests** are a type of molecular test that may take 1-7 days for results. These tests are highly accurate.
- **Antigen tests*** (sometimes called rapid tests) may take as little as 30 minutes for results. These tests are reliable if the results are positive for COVID-19. They are less reliable when the results are negative. Therefore, if a person with symptoms has a negative antigen test, they could still have COVID-19.

*If a child has a negative antigen test, the facility may require a PCR test to confirm they do not have COVID-19.

Returning to Child Care After Quarantine

Quarantine means anyone who has been exposed to someone with COVID-19 stays home, away from other people, and carefully monitors their health until it is no longer likely that they will become sick. People who have been exposed may become sick any time in the 14 days after being exposed.

- If a child is **living with a person with COVID-19** and has daily contact, the total time for quarantine may be up to 24 days. The person who has COVID-19 could be contagious for their entire 10-day period of isolation. Other people in the household may catch COVID-19 on any of those days. Therefore, household member's quarantine "count down" begins once the person with symptoms has completed their 10th day of isolation.
- If a child has been **exposed only one time** to a person with COVID-19 such as a teacher or friend and does not see that person again, the total time for quarantine is 14 days.

For questions about quarantine times, including options for shortened quarantine, the child care facility will follow guidance from the local health department.

Notify the child care facility if your child develops symptoms of COVID-19 during quarantine.

Children at Higher Risk

Children are less affected by COVID-19 compared to adults. However, children with special medical needs, such as the conditions listed below, may be at increased risk for severe illness.

- obesity
- sickle cell disease
- congenital (since birth) heart disease
- diabetes
- chronic kidney disease
- asthma and other chronic lung diseases
- immunosuppression due to cancer or immune-weakening medications

This is not a complete list. Contact your child's health care provider with concerns.

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Nebulizers

First, children with the following symptoms should not be at child care:

- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- a new cough or any uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing
- a change in their cough from baseline for children with chronic allergic/asthmatic cough. ([Source](#))

Giving nebulizer treatments to children in child care may increase the spread of COVID-19, as it makes the child's respiratory droplets hang in the air longer and perhaps spread to a larger area. During the COVID-19 pandemic, asthma treatments using inhalers with spacers should be used whenever possible and nebulizers should be avoided.

Staying Safe at Home

Practice and reinforce good health habits with your family. Remember the "3 W's"

- **W**ear a face covering over your nose and mouth.
- **W**ait 6 feet apart. Avoid close contact with others.
- **W**ash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.

Prepare and plan.

Talk to your child(ren) about the changes that they see in their classroom and how they can help prevent the spread of the virus. Make a plan in case the child care facility or classroom has to close temporarily. Talk to your employer about sick leave or working remotely in case you need to stay home with your child.

How to Protect Yourself and Others

Accessible version: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

Know how it spreads



- **The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.**
- The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.
 - » Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
 - » Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.
 - » These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
 - » COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms.

Everyone should

Clean your hands often



- **Wash your hands** often with 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.

Avoid close contact



- **Limit contact with others as much as possible.**
- **Avoid close contact** with people who are sick.
- **Put distance between yourself and other people.**
 - » Remember that some people without symptoms may be able to spread virus.
 - » This is especially important for **people who are at higher risk of getting very sick.** www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html



[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others



- **You could spread COVID-19 to others** even if you do not feel sick.
- **Everyone should wear a mask in public settings** and when around people not living in their household, especially when social distancing is difficult to maintain.
 - » Masks should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- **The mask is meant to protect other people** in case you are infected.
- Do **NOT** use a facemask meant for a healthcare worker.
- Continue to **keep about 6 feet between yourself and others**. The mask is not a substitute for social distancing.

Cover coughs and sneezes



- **Always cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.
- **Throw used tissues** in the trash.
- Immediately **wash your hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Clean and disinfect



- **Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces** daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks. www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html
- **If surfaces are dirty, clean them:** Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- **Then, use a household disinfectant.** You can see a list of [EPA-registered household disinfectants here](#).