

DECISION TREE TOOL FOR SCHOOL NURSES



STUDENT

presents with a possible COVID-19 symptom(s).

Try to isolate student during evaluation and wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Are symptoms consistent with a known underlying condition (e.g., asthma, seasonal allergies)?

YES

Has student had close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case within the last 14 days?

NO. Administer appropriate intervention for symptoms of condition. Did student's symptoms improve/return to baseline?

YES. Student may return to class per school policy. Parent/guardian should monitor student daily for any worsening or new symptoms.*

NO OR CANNOT DETERMINE IMPROVEMENT.

Exclude student from school per district policy. If symptoms improve with routine treatment of underlying condition, student may return to school per district policy.*

Parent/guardian should monitor student daily for any worsening or new symptoms. If symptoms worsen, refer to physician for evaluation.

YES (or cannot determine if exposed to close contact/meets exposure definition).

- Give student appropriate PPE and isolate until parent/guardian arrives.
 - Administer appropriate intervention for symptoms of condition.
 - Follow local health authority/local health department-recommended protocols regarding report and care of potential COVID-19 cases.
 - Instruct family to quarantine for 14 days any students with unconfirmed COVID-19 who have had close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case.
 - Refer student to diagnostic testing** or physician. If confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19, student should isolate at home until:
 - 24 hours fever-free (without medication), and
 - Improvement in symptoms, and
 - 10 days have passed since symptoms began;
- OR**
- Cleared of COVID-19 by physician;***
- OR**
- The student has a negative PCR test result indicating symptoms were not due to a COVID-19 infection.

NO OR UNSURE

Has student had potential exposure to a person with confirmed COVID-19 (e.g., had close contact, lived in area with high community transmission, or traveled to an area with high community transmission in the last 14 days?)

NO. For symptoms that require exclusion per district policy, send student home. If symptoms resolve within 24-48 hours, student may return per district policy.

If symptoms persist >48 hours, symptoms worsen, or additional symptoms develop, refer to physician for evaluation.



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Medical Standard of Care The information and opinions presented as part of this screening tool should not be used or referred to as establishing medical standards of care for the purposes of litigation, including expert testimony. The standard of care is dependent upon the particular facts and circumstances of each individual case and no generalization can be made that would apply to all cases. Patients should consult with their own physicians for specific medical advice.

*Coinfection of COVID-19 and another illness is possible. If symptoms worsen or new symptoms appear, refer student to testing or to physician for evaluation.

**This can be through a PCR or antigen test. For students without access to a physician, suggest testing locations listed on the [Texas Department of State Health Services website](#).

***A doctor's note or negative test should not be required to return to school. Some tests can yield false negatives if taken too soon, and individuals with confirmed COVID-19 can continue to test positive after the infectious period has passed. Antigen tests currently are not as reliable in determining a true negative.

DECISION TREE A TOOL FOR SCHOOL NURSES

COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS DISEASE



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This tool is largely adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) [Screening K-12 Students for Symptoms of COVID-19: Limitations and Considerations](#). It does not replace local health guidance or state agency requirements and should complement sound clinical judgment.

COVID-19 Symptoms

- Mild illness is common in pediatric cases. Most present with symptoms of upper respiratory infection.
- Significant symptoms, which may affect students' ability to learn and put them at risk for spreading to others, might be, among others:
 - Fever (in absence of local guidance, defined as 100.4°F per CDC), taking into consideration physical exertion and outside temperature, which may affect temperature reading;
 - New uncontrolled cough that causes shortness of breath or difficulty breathing (for students with chronic allergies/asthmatic cough, a change in baseline uncharacteristic of underlying illness, especially after treatment is administered);
 - New onset of severe headache, especially with fever;
 - Nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, or abdominal pain; or
 - Sore throat.
- Other possible COVID-19 symptoms are:
 - New loss of taste or smell,
 - New onset of fatigue,
 - Congestion/runny nose, or
 - New onset of muscle or body aches.

Exposure Definition

A student is considered to have been exposed if he or she:

- Had close contact[‡] with a person with confirmed COVID-19 within the last 14 days,
- Traveled to an area with high community transmission of COVID-19 identified by a federal, state, or local health authority (within the last 14 days), or
- Lives in areas of high community transmission as defined by the local health department or authority.

[‡] Per CDC, close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of a COVID-19 confirmed case for at least 15 minutes regardless if either was wearing a face covering.