

# FROM THE DOE:

## Health and Safety Policy Updates:

### January 3, 2022

Dear Families,

We hope you had a restful holiday and were able to spend time with your loved ones. As we welcome students back into our classrooms from a well-deserved winter break, our highest priority continues to be the health and safety of our students, families, and staff. To this end, we are putting additional health and safety measures in place to ensure students and staff are safe and that our schools can continue to be open.

The following updates were made in partnership with our City and State public health colleagues and are based on federal and scientific guidance.

#### Home Test Kits

- Beginning January 3, schools will distribute free, take-home COVID-19 rapid test kits to **any student or staff who exhibit COVID-like symptoms or have been in a classroom where a positive case has been identified.**
- If your child was **exposed** to COVID-19 at school, please help your child take the first test on the day they receive the home test and help your child take the second test five days after exposure or at the first indication of symptoms.
  - o Your child may continue to attend school as long as your child receives negative test results and does not experience any symptoms of COVID-19.
  - o If your child has COVID-like symptoms or feels ill before the fifth day, please have your child isolate, and take the second home test immediately.

o If your child tests positive on either home test, your child must isolate for 10 days following the first positive result. Please contact your child's school immediately to inform them and for further guidance.

- If your child **had symptoms** of COVID-19 at school, please help your child take the first test **immediately** and help your child take the second test **24 hours later**.

o Your child may not attend school until they receive negative results on both of these home tests taken within 24 hours of each other and have been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication OR if your child receives a negative test result from a PCR COVID test.

o If your child tests positive on either home test, your child must isolate for 10 days following the first positive result. Please contact your child's school immediately and report the test results.

- Any student who tests positive on a take-home test should immediately report it to the school and begin isolating. Students who test positive must isolate for 10 days and can return to school on Day 11. No negative test is required to return to school.

- As a reminder, all students, staff and visitors must pass the DOE health screener in order to enter school buildings. Additional questions will be added to the health screeners for those students and staff who receive at-home rapid test kits to share their negative result. No other proof of a negative result is required in order for these students to enter the school building.

### **New Quarantine Policy**

Our goal is to ensure that students safely remain in school as much as possible, and we have updated our policies to ensure we meet this goal. This means that if there is a positive case in a classroom:

- For students in kindergarten through grade 12, unvaccinated or not yet fully vaccinated students who were in close proximity to a positive case will no longer have to quarantine and will continue attending school if they do not have symptoms and do not have a positive test result from a COVID test. Instead, all students and adults in that classroom will receive a take-home rapid test kit and take two tests over the course of five days.

- For students in 3-K and Pre-K, the quarantine policy will remain the same, meaning that any 3-K or pre- K student who was in close proximity to a positive case will still have to quarantine for 10 days.

### **Increased In-School Surveillance Testing**

To further ensure the safety of our students, families, and staff, the in-school surveillance testing program is expanding to double the number of individuals tested in each school, including both vaccinated and unvaccinated students, in grades 1 and up. The random in-school surveillance program continues to provide public health experts with an accurate look at the prevalence of COVID-19 in schools. We encourage all families who have not yet submitted consent, regardless of whether their child is vaccinated, to consent to in- school testing through their NYC Schools Account ([schoolsaccount.nyc](https://schoolsaccount.nyc)) or return a signed paper form to the school. Additional information on testing for students and the printable version of the consent form in multiple languages can be found on the New York City Department of Education (DOE) website: [schools.nyc.gov/covidtesting](https://schools.nyc.gov/covidtesting)

Testing is a critical part of keeping schools open and communities safe. Thank you to those families who have already consented to testing, and for your cooperation by participating in our in-school testing program!

### **COVID-19 Testing Sites**

- The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) continues to open new testing sites throughout the five boroughs. *We strongly encourage* that all students get tested for COVID-19, through a PCR, lab-based rapid test, or a home test kit on a continuous basis, regardless of vaccination status. For a list of testing sites, including sites with at-home rapid tests, call 212-COVID19, visit [nyc.gov/covidtest](https://nyc.gov/covidtest), text "COVID TEST" to 855-48, or call 311 to find a nearby testing site.
- Additionally, many pharmacies and doctors' offices are offering COVID-19 testing. Please check with your pediatrician's office or local pharmacy to see if you can schedule a test.

We know that nothing is more important to you than keeping your children in school, learning in healthy and safe environments. The changes we are announcing today aim to

keep students in our classrooms with the least amount of disruption as possible, while putting their safety front and center.

We will continue to update you as the situation changes and hear your feedback on these updated policies and procedures. We thank you in advance for partnering with us to keep our children and staff safe in school.

In partnership,

David C. Banks  
New York City Schools Chancellor