

For the latest US CDC guidance for early care and education programs, visit [CDC COVID-19 Guidance for Operating Early Care and Education/Child Care Programs](#).

Maine CDC continues to provide updated guidance specific to Maine COVID-19 conditions. Visit [COVID-19: Communities, Workplaces, and Schools](#) for more information.

For information on COVID-19 testing locations, vaccination sites, treatments, community level data and important updates for the state, visit the [State of Maine COVID-19 Response](#) page.

Early care and education facilities are not required to contact Maine CDC for each positive case. Please notify Maine CDC when there are five or more positive cases at your facility. Together, your facility, Maine CDC and a Child Care Licensing Specialist will determine if a full or partial closure of the program is necessary. Call Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821.

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Maine Department of Education advised Maine early care and education providers and schools that, effective March 9, 2022, other than for individuals returning from isolation or quarantine, masking in such settings is optional. Each early care and education provider, like other businesses, retains the discretion to implement masking protocols for individuals age 2 years and older. Masks should not be worn by children under age 2 or by anyone who has trouble breathing. For the latest US CDC guidance regarding masks, visit [Use and Care of Masks](#).

This document provides Maine CDC’s guidance for situations where someone in an early care and education program, including children, staff, volunteers, service providers, household members in home-based programs, and any other person who has contact with children in your care, is exposed to COVID-19 through a close contact or tests positive for the virus that causes COVID-19.

I. Isolation and Quarantine

A. Isolation

Isolation is the process of separating individuals who are infected with COVID-19 from others. It is for anyone who has COVID-19, and for those who are suspected of having COVID-19 because of the symptoms they exhibit. Isolation helps prevent the spread the virus to others. Table 1 provides guidance on who should isolate in early care and education settings.

Table 1: Isolation Guidance for Early Care and Education Settings

<p>If positive for COVID-19 or symptomatic, regardless of vaccination status: Isolate.</p>	<p>Stay home for at least 5 days:</p> <p>Isolate from others in your home.</p> <p>Wear a well-fitted mask if you must be around others in your home.</p>	<p>Ending isolation if you had symptoms:</p> <p>End isolation after 5 full days if you are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing</p>	<p>Take precautions until day 10:</p> <p>Wear a mask. Wear a well-fitted mask for 10 full days any time you are around others inside your home, in early care and</p>	<p>If you cannot wear a well-fitted mask:</p> <p>End isolation after 10 full days if you are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and</p>
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		<p>medication) and your symptoms are improving.</p> <p>Ending isolation if you did NOT have symptoms: End isolation after at least 5 full days after your positive test.</p> <p>If you were severely ill with COVID-19 or immune-compromised: You should isolate for at least 10 days. Consult your health care provider before ending isolation.</p>	<p>education settings, or in public. Do not go to places where you are unable to wear a mask.</p> <p>Avoid travel.</p> <p>Avoid being around people who are at high risk.</p>	<p>your symptoms are improving)</p>
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For home-based programs, if any person (child, provider, staff, household member) is isolating in the home, they must be completely separated from the early care and education program while it is operating. If complete separation is not possible, the program may not have any unrelated children in care.

B. Quarantine

Quarantine is the process of separating individuals who were in close contact with someone who tested positive or had symptoms of COVID-19. Quarantine minimizes transmission of COVID-19 by keeping people who have been in [close contact](#) with someone with COVID-19 apart from others. Table 2 provides guidance on who should quarantine.

Table 2: Quarantine Guidance for Early Care and Education Settings *(Table 2 assumes that the exposed individual is able to wear a well-fitted mask unless otherwise specified.)*

<p>If exposed to COVID-19 and are NOT up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccinations: Quarantine.</p>	<p>Quarantine for at least 5 days:</p> <p>Stay home Stay home and quarantine for at least 5 full days.</p>	<p>After quarantine:</p> <p>Watch for symptoms Watch for symptoms until 10 days after you last had close contact with someone with COVID-19.</p>	<p>Take precautions until day 10:</p> <p>Wear a mask Wear a well-fitted mask for 10 full days any time you are around others inside your home, at early care</p>
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	<p>Wear a well-fitted mask if you must be around others in your home.</p> <p>Get tested We encourage you to get tested, even if you don't develop symptoms, at least 5 days after you last had close contact with someone with COVID-19.</p>	<p>If you develop symptoms Isolate immediately and get tested. Continue to stay home until you know the results. Wear a well-fitted mask around others.</p>	<p>and education programs, or in public. Do not go to places where you are unable to wear a mask.</p> <p>Avoid travel.</p> <p>Avoid being around people who are at high risk.</p>
<p>If exposed to COVID-19 and are up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccinations</p>	<p>No quarantine: You do not need to stay home unless you develop symptoms.</p> <p>Get tested We encourage you to get tested, even if you don't develop symptoms, at least 5 days after you last had close contact with someone with COVID-19.</p>	<p>Watch for symptoms: Watch for symptoms until 10 days after you last had close contact with someone with COVID-19.</p> <p>If you develop symptoms Isolate immediately and get tested. Continue to stay home until you know the results. Wear a well-fitted mask around others.</p>	<p>Take precautions until day 10:</p> <p>Wear a mask Wear a well-fitted mask for 10 full days any time you are around others inside your home, in early care and education settings, or in public. Do not go to places where you are unable to wear a mask.</p> <p>Avoid travel.</p> <p>Avoid being around people who are at high risk.</p>
<p>If exposed to COVID-19 and tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 90 days</p>	<p>No quarantine You do not need to stay home unless you develop symptoms.</p>	<p>Watch for symptoms Watch for symptoms until 10 days after you last had close contact with someone with COVID-19.</p> <p>If you develop symptoms Isolate immediately and get tested. Continue to stay home until you know the results. Wear a well-fitted mask around others.</p>	<p>Take precautions until day 10</p> <p>Wear a mask Wear a well-fitted mask for 10 full days any time you are around others inside your home, in early care and education settings, or in public. Do not go to places where you are unable to wear a mask.</p>

			<p>Avoid travel.</p> <p>Avoid being around people who are at high risk.</p>
<p>If exposed to COVID-19 AND CANNOT wear a well-fitted mask, regardless of vaccination status or previous COVID-19 infection</p>	<p>Quarantine for at least 10 days:</p> <p>Stay home Stay home and quarantine for at least 10 full days.</p> <p>Get tested We encourage you to get tested, even if you don't develop symptoms, at least 5 days after you last had close contact with someone with COVID-19.</p>	<p>Watch for symptoms: Watch for symptoms until 10 days after you last had close contact with someone with COVID-19.</p> <p>If you develop symptoms: Isolate immediately and get tested. Continue to stay home until you know the results.</p>	<p>Take precautions until day 10:</p> <p>Avoid travel.</p> <p>Avoid going to public places and being around people who are at high risk.</p>

For home-based programs, if any person (provider, staff, household member) is quarantining in the home, they must be completely separated from the early care and education program while it is operating. If complete separation is not possible, the program may not have any unrelated children in care.

II. **“Test to Stay” For Early Care and Education Settings**

“Test to Stay” is a practice comprising contact tracing and serial testing to allow close contacts of confirmed cases who are not fully vaccinated to continue attending early care and education programs without quarantining. Effective March 16, 2022, Maine early care and education settings may use either of the two approaches to implement Test to Stay outlined below. One uses at-home rapid antigen tests and the other uses pooled testing.

For children, families, and early care and education facilities unable to implement either of the Test to Stay approaches described below, the [Maine CDC Isolation and Quarantine Guidance for Child Care Settings](#), also outlined above, continues to apply.

A. Test to Stay Using At-Home Rapid Antigen Tests

1. For children **2 years of age and older who can wear a mask:**
 - A child exposed to COVID-19 can continue to attend the early care and education program provided all of the following conditions are met:
 - The child is asymptomatic.

- The child has a negative at-home rapid antigen test result on days 1, 3, 5 after exposure (exposure is day 0). These tests should be administered by the parent or guardian before the child goes to the early care and education program.
 - The child wears a well-fitted mask for 10 days after the exposure, per the mask guidance for quarantine outlined above.
 - In general, children who have previously tested positive for COVID-19 and who can wear a mask should not be retested for 90 days following the date of the positive test result, and do not need to quarantine if exposed again during this time period. However, a child who develops new onset of symptoms consistent with COVID-19 infection during the 90-day period following the initial positive test collection date should be retested. The child should follow guidance outlined above in the section addressing isolation.
- 2. For children under 2 years of age and for children of any age who cannot wear a mask:**
- A child exposed to COVID-19 can continue attending the early care and education program provided both of the following conditions are met:
 - The child is asymptomatic.
 - The child has a negative at-home rapid antigen test result on days 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9 after exposure (exposure is day 0). These tests should be administered by the parent or guardian before the child goes to the early care and education facility.
 - In general, children who have previously tested positive for COVID-19 and who can wear a mask should not be retested for 90 days following the date of the positive test result, and do not need to quarantine if exposed again during this time period. However, a child who develops new onset of symptoms consistent with COVID-19 infection during the 90-day period following the initial positive test collection date should be retested. The child should follow guidance outlined above in the section addressing isolation.
 - At this time, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has not approved or authorized any at-home rapid antigen test for use in children under 2 years of age. Nonetheless, Maine CDC believes that at-home rapid antigen tests are safe and effective for use in children under 2 years of age. Maine CDC recommends that parents or guardians deciding to test children under 2 years of age administer the at-home rapid antigen test, not the early care and education provider.

For more information about the availability of at-home rapid antigen tests, please visit <https://www.maine.gov/covid19/testing>.

Early care and education programs and caregivers do not need to call Maine CDC to report at-home test results. Maine CDC does not collect results from at-home, self-collection tests. For more information on at-home, self-collection tests, see additional guidance from Maine CDC. <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/documents/At-Home-Test-Guidance.pdf>

Parents should consult their child's health care provider if they have any questions or concerns about the use of the at-home rapid antigen tests for their child. Test kits should be safely stored and used in accordance with manufacturer's directions. Test kit materials should be disposed of properly after use and kept out of reach of children.

B. Test to Stay Using Pooled Testing

Pooled testing, available to children 2 years of age and older, involves mixing several test samples together in a "batch" or "pool" and then testing the pooled sample with a PCR test to detect COVID-19. If a pooled test result is negative, then all individuals within that pool are presumed negative. If a pooled test result is positive, then all individuals in the pool

must be retested individually using an individual sample already collected. An individual identified as positive will need to isolate and close contacts will be identified.

A child participating in pooled testing who is exposed to COVID-19 can avoid quarantine. The child should wear a well-fitted mask for 10 days after the exposure, per the mask guidance for quarantine outlined above.

Testing occurs once per week with two samples collected simultaneously from each individual participating in the pooled testing program, which ensures that all positive pools can be tested on the individual level immediately. Pooled testing participants do not need additional testing beyond the pooled and individual testing if identified as close contacts, provided they remain asymptomatic.

The Federal government offers pooled testing for early care and education facilities through Operation Expanded Testing. To learn more or to enroll, visit www.operationexpandedtesting.com or email OperationET@ClinicalEnterprise.com.
