

# Austin Public Health

## Frequently Asked Questions on Reopening Austin-Travis County Schools



*This document includes questions about COVID-19 asked by schools during meetings and questions that have been emailed to Austin Public Health at [APHSchoolInfo@austintexas.gov](mailto:APHSchoolInfo@austintexas.gov). Austin Public Health will update this document on a regular basis.*



## Face Coverings

### **Q: Are vented face coverings acceptable?**

**A:** No, the CDC does not recommend using masks with valves or vents. Masks with one-way valves or vents allow air to be exhaled through a hole in the material, which can result in expelled respiratory droplets that can reach others. This type of mask does not prevent the person wearing the mask from transmitting COVID-19 to others. [See CDC Face Covering Guidance](#)

### **Q: Should face coverings be removed when sleeping?**

**A:** Yes, face coverings should be removed when sleeping. Medline [defines sleeping](#) as a state of unconsciousness. Therefore, anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious should not be wearing a mask. See page 14 of the [Austin Public Health Interim Guidance on Reopening for Austin-Travis County Schools](#).

### **Q: Is there a list of diagnosis where a student shouldn't wear a mask?**

**A:** Face coverings are not required for people who have a medical or behavioral condition or disability and cannot wear a face covering (including, but not limited to, any person who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious or incapacitated, or is otherwise unable to put on or remove the face covering without assistance).

APH Interim Guidance on Reopening for Austin-Travis County Schools does not include a list of diagnoses that preclude people from wearing masks. However, if staff or parents have questions as to whether an individual's medical or behavioral condition or disability prevents them from wearing a face covering, they are encouraged to consult with their healthcare provider.

## **Medical treatments:**

### **Q: How should we handle nebulizer treatments at the school?**

**A:** Schools should refer to CDC guidance when developing illness management policies. Schools should obtain the appropriate [personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#) for staff who administer nebulizer treatments and peak flow meters to students with asthma. According to the CDC, PPE for use when administering nebulizer treatments or peak flow meters to students with asthma consists of gloves, medical or surgical facemask, and eye protection. School staff should be trained on when to use PPE, what PPE is necessary, where this PPE is stored, how to properly don (put on), use, and doff (take off) PPE, and how to properly dispose of used PPE. Staff should also be trained on how to administer nebulizer treatments and peak flow meters.

[Per the CDC](#), during this COVID-19 pandemic, if a nebulizer treatment or use of peak flow meter is necessary at school for a student, the number of people present in the room should be limited to the student and the staff member administering the treatment or peak flow meter. After the nebulizer treatment or use of peak flow meter, this room should undergo [routine cleaning and disinfection](#).



## Transportation

**Q: If an individual who rides a bus tests positive for COVID-19, do we have to quarantine all the students on the bus or only those who were within 6 feet of the COVID-19 positive individual? Do students still need to quarantine if the windows on the bus were open?**



**A:** Only people who are identified as “close contacts” of the COVID-19 positive person must quarantine. Schools should use the [CDC definition of close contacts](#) when identifying close contacts and determining who should quarantine. APH recommends that schools utilize assigned seating in all classrooms and school transportation (e.g. buses, vans) to facilitate the rapid identification of close contacts should the school become aware of a COVID-19 infected individual.

The CDC does not consider the availability of open windows in their definition of close contact. Therefore, anyone within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more should quarantine.



## Isolation and Quarantine

**Q: I am caring for my child who tested positive for COVID-19. Do I still have to quarantine?**

**A:** [Yes, you still have to quarantine](#) because you would be considered a close contact of your child. Your 14-day quarantine would start after the 10-day isolation period for your child ends. If you have to care for another member of your family who tests positive for COVID-19, your 14-day quarantine would need to restart after the 10-day isolation periods for that family member ends.

**Q: If a student is sent home from on-campus learning for self-quarantine, can that student attend before and after school-sponsored activities, such as athletic practices, rehearsals, and clubs?**

**A:** No, the student should stay home for 14 days after their last contact with a person who was diagnosed with COVID-19. Children should not go to school or to child care in person. They should also not go to sports practices, games, lessons, or other activities.

Quarantine is used to keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. Quarantine helps prevent spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are sick or if they are infected with the virus without feeling symptoms. People in quarantine should stay home, separate themselves from others, monitor their health, and follow directions from their state or local health department. Anyone who has had close contact with someone with COVID-19 should stay home for 14 days after their last exposure to that person. See [CDC Quarantine Guidance](#)

**Q: I was around someone who has COVID-19, and my COVID-19 test came back negative. Do I still need to quarantine for 14 days after I was last exposed?**

**A:** Yes. You should still self-quarantine for 14 days since your last exposure. It can take up to 14 days after exposure to the virus for a person to develop COVID-19 symptoms. A negative result before end of the 14-day quarantine period does not rule out possible infection. By self-quarantining for 14 days, you lower the chance of possibly exposing others to COVID-19. See [CDC Guidance: If You or Someone You Know is Sick or Had Contact with Someone who Has COVID-19](#)

**Q: I was around someone who has COVID-19, but I feel fine. Why should I stay home?**

**A:** People with COVID-19 can still spread the virus even if they don't have any symptoms. If you were around someone who had COVID-19, it is critical that you stay home and away from others for 14 days from the last day that you were around that person. Staying home and away from others at all times helps your health department in the fight against COVID-19 and helps protect you, your family, and your community.

**Q: What should I do if I was around someone who was identified as a close contact?**

**A:** If you have been around someone who was identified as a [close contact](#) to a person with COVID-19, closely monitor yourself for any [symptoms of COVID-19](#). You do not need to self-quarantine unless you develop symptoms or if the person identified as a close contact develops COVID-19. You will need to begin a 14-day quarantine if you develop symptoms of COVID-19 or if the person identified as a close contact develops COVID-19.