



Public Health Mōno-Gram

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Public Health
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MONO COUNTY RULES FOR RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER ILLNESS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

January 12, 2021 - The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented disruption of schools. Enabling our schools to return to in-person classroom education with safety precautions is a high priority of Mono County Public Health and the Unified Command Emergency Operations Center.

One important safety precaution involves minimizing the presence in schools of people with acute illness that could be COVID-19. This requires careful adherence to legal requirements to exclude sick children and staff from school. I have issued guidance in the form of a Health Officer Order dated January 9, 2021, establishing a standardized process for safely returning persons who have been ill to school. These rules must balance the objective of preventing virus transmission in schools against the harm of increasing absenteeism. Compliance with Health Officer Orders is mandatory under law and violations are potentially punishable with civil or criminal penalties.

One of the particular challenges of COVID-19 is the non-specific nature of symptoms. It can be impossible in many cases to clinically distinguish COVID-19 from the many common viral illnesses that people experience. Testing is necessary to identify COVID-19, but current testing is imperfect, with limitations including turnaround times often of 2-3 days or more. Therefore, in order to keep our schools healthy and open it is necessary to exclude children and staff with any of a fairly wide range of common illness symptoms.

Symptoms that may represent COVID-19 and that require persons to follow this order, include

- fever (greater than or equal to 100.4F)
- cough
- shortness of breath
- sore throat
- new runny nose or congestion
- headache
- loss of taste or smell
- unexplained body aches (muscles or joints)
- nausea, vomiting or diarrhea

Mono County - Healthy People, Healthy Communities

Mono County Health Department PO Box 3329, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

Mono County Board of Supervisors: Phone (760) 932-5433

District 1: Jennifer Kreitz, District 2: Rhonda Duggan, District 3: Bob Gardner,

District 4: John Peters, District 5: Stacy Corless, CAO: Robert Lawton

ISOLATION GUIDELINES (for children and for school or childcare staff)

1. Any child or adult who has developed illness with symptoms that may represent COVID-19 may return to school when **any** of the following conditions are met:
 - a. They have isolated at home for 10 full days from the onset of symptoms **and**, on the 11th day, have been without a fever for at least 24 hours **and** all other symptoms are improving.
 - b. They have obtained COVID-19 testing (PCR) which is negative and at least 5 days have passed since onset of illness and there has been no fever for at least 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medications such as acetaminophen aka Tylenol or ibuprofen aka Motrin). Parents must present documentation to the school of the negative COVID-19 test performed during the symptomatic period.
 - c. Individuals who have had a positive COVID-19 PCR or antigen test must isolate at home for 10 full days from the onset of symptoms **and**, on the 11th day, have been without a fever for at least 24 hours **and** all other symptoms are improving.
2. COVID-19 has varied manifestations, from no symptoms at all to severe disease with risk of death. Symptoms that may represent COVID and that require persons to follow this order, include fever (greater than or equal to 100.4F); cough; shortness of breath; sore throat; new runny nose or congestion; headache; loss of taste or smell; unexplained body aches (muscles or joints); nausea or vomiting; diarrhea.

In addition to these isolation rules, the January 9, 2021 Health Officer Order establishes rules for **QUARANTINE, applying to children or staff exposed to known COVID-19 case-patients but without current symptoms of illness:**

1. In school and childcare settings persons with a well-defined risk of COVID exposure must quarantine at home for at least 10 days after last contact with potentially contagious person AND obtain testing with negative result between days 7 and 10.
2. Note that the COVID incubation period may be as long as 14 days, although most people who are going to become contagious or develop illness do so within 10 days. While a 14-day quarantine day period is considered the safest practice, 10 days is considered reasonably safe and will reduce the number of days absent from school or work.
3. Testing is essential before the end of quarantine because many COVID-19 cases have minimal or no symptoms.

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