

COVID-19 in Schools: FAQ

What happens when a staff member or student tests positive for COVID-19 in a school?

If someone in a school tests positive for COVID-19, they will be contacted by Public Health in the Nova Scotia Authority (NSHA). They will be told to self-isolate until NSHA Public Health tells them they are no longer infectious. At the same time, NSHA Public Health will work with the school to let families know about the case and information on what to do next. Part of the work that NSHA Public Health will do, is to identify any close contacts of the student or staff member and notify them.

Will my child be sent home if there is a positive COVID-19 case in their school?

If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, NSHA Public Health will work with the school to determine if any other students or staff are close contacts. A close contact is someone who has come into close contact (within 2 metres / 6 feet) for a long time (15 minutes or more), with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

NSHA Public Health will contact all close contacts, first by letter and then by phone, to arrange testing and to give them information on what to do next. Close contacts must self-isolate for 14 days.

Will my child's class or school be closed?

A decision to close a classroom or school will be based on the current situation. A closure decision would come from NSHA Public Health to the school.

How will the privacy of staff and students be protected if there is a positive COVID-19 case in a school?

NSHA Public Health takes protecting the privacy and personal health information of Nova Scotians very seriously. To quickly identify close contacts, NSHA Public Health may share the name of the student or staff member with the school principal. This will help in the investigation. Close contacts will not be told the name of the person who was the case.

What should I do when I hear there is a case at my child's school?

We understand that families may feel anxious when they learn about a COVID-19 exposure in their school. The school will stay open, unless otherwise directed by NSHA Public Health. Students should continue to attend, and families should continue to monitor the health of their child every day. If your child begins to feel unwell, you can help them to take the online self-assessment: <https://covid-self-assessment.novascotia.ca>

If your child is identified by NSHA Public Health as a close contact, you will be contacted directly and provided information on what to do next.

Is there a specific number of cases that, once reached, would force the school to close?

No. Each situation is different. Decisions to keep a school open, close a classroom, or close the entire school are based on level of risk to other students and staff, and/or operational capacity to support in-school learning.

NSHA Public Health in consultation with the Regional Centre for Education/CSAP and the school, may recommend a school/classroom close due to public health concerns.

The school in consultation with the Regional Centre for Education/CSAP may also choose to close a school/classroom due to operational capacity (staffing) due to COVID-19 impacts in their school. For example: If substitutes cannot be secured to cover for teachers that are out sick.

If my child is a close contact of a COVID-19 positive case in a school, must the entire family self-isolate?

No. Only your child is required to self-isolate for 14 days. Other members in the home should try to limit close contact (if possible) and monitor for symptoms.

My child received a negative COVID-19 test result. When can they return to school?

If your child's test is negative and they are not required to isolate for any other reason (ie: they are close contact of a case), they may return to school when they are feeling better without taking fever medication for 24 hours. If they have mild or lingering symptoms such as a cough or runny nose, they can still return to school. You should monitor their health for any new or worsening symptoms.

If your child is tested because they are considered a close contact and the test is negative, then they will have to continue to isolate for 14 days.

For more information on Preventing COVID-19 Spread in Schools visit:

<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/Feeling-Unwell-Families-Fact-sheet.pdf>