

Hochul updates COVID-19 guidance for schools

State Department of Health releases new guidance for K-12 schools

√ *Quarantine no longer required for students exposed to COVID-19*

Gov. Kathy Hochul on Monday announced updated coronavirus guidance that aligns with new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations as children, teachers and faculty across the state prepare to head back to school in the coming weeks.

Her team said, "With increased access to COVID-19 information, vaccination, testing and treatment, New York state is updating its response to ensure all students, teachers and faculty can make a safe return to the classroom next month."

Hochul said, "Since the early, uncertain days of the pandemic, New York schools, teachers and parents stepped up to ensure continued learning and a safe return to the classroom. Today, we are making sure that state and federal guidance is aligned so that students and educators can enter the classroom with confidence and have a safe, healthy school year. We're getting this information out to parents, into schools, and making sure that our children are where they need to be this fall. We know there's no replacement for in-classroom learning, and we're going to make sure that this year is a very different year."

COVID Mitigation Strategies for 2022-23 School Year

•Quarantine

•The CDC no longer recommends quarantine, except in high-risk congregate settings.

√ The CDC recommends all people with a known or suspected COVID-19 exposure, regardless of vaccination status or history of prior COVID-19 infection, follow current CDC exposure recommendations, which include wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator for a full 10-day period, and getting tested at least five days after close contact (or sooner if symptoms develop).

•Staying Home When Sick or Symptomatic

•The CDC continues to rec-



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ommend that people stay home when sick. Any student or staff member who has symptoms of respiratory or gastrointestinal infections, such as cough, fever, sore throat, vomiting or diarrhea, should stay home.

•Testing is recommended for people with symptoms of COVID-19 as soon as possible after symptoms begin. Those who are at risk for getting very sick with COVID-19 who test positive should consult with a health care provider right away for possible treatment, even if their symptoms are mild.

√ If an individual tests posi-

tive for COVID-19 and do not have a regular health care provider, they can be evaluated for treatment by either calling 1-888-TREAT-NY or visiting the New York State COVID-19 ExpressCare Therapeutics Access website.

•People who are symptomatic and awaiting COVID-19 test results or have tested positive for COVID-19 should follow CDC's isolation guidance.

•Isolation

•People who have tested positive or are awaiting COVID-19 test results should remain home and follow the CDC's isolation guidance. Isolation may end based on how serious someone's COVID-19 symptoms were.

√ If someone had no symptoms, isolation may end after day five.

√ If someone had symptoms,

isolation may end after day five if they are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and symptoms are improving.

√ People should wear a mask through day 10 after ending isolation when they are feeling better (no fever without use of fever-reducing medication and symptoms improving).

√ Antigen testing is not required to end isolation; however, some schools may allow use of the "test-based strategy" to potentially shorten the length of time for post-isolation mask use.

Hochul's team said, "This builds upon New York's rigorous, multifaceted approach in managing and mitigating COVID-19. Last week, Gov. Hochul announced the relaunch of the #Vaxtoschool COVID-19 vaccine effort, including more than three-dozen pop-up vaccination sites throughout the state in the coming weeks, with more being added in the near future."

In March, the governor lifted the state mask requirement in schools. She said this decision was based on key coronavirus data trends "showing New York's significant progress in vaccinations and declining cases."

Again, Hochul's team said, "New York has made significant progress in the fight against COVID-19. It is through these

ongoing efforts that schools can provide safe instructional environments, increase access to COVID-19 testing, and ensure that staff, students and their families have access to the resources they need to safely remain in school."

New York State Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett said, "Thanks to the heroic work of our educators, children across New York have been able to make a safe return to the classroom. This new guidance will give schools and districts more flexibility to continue providing in-person instruction as we head into the new school year."

As New Yorkers move into the fall season, the State and Department of Health will continue to provide parents and guardians resources, along with continued testing and vaccination.

Keeping up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations continues to be a leading public health strategy to prevent severe illness. Everyone 6 months of age and older is now eligible for coronavirus vaccination.

All school children who are 5 years of age or older are eligible for a booster. This includes individuals who have been fully vaccinated and have not received an additional vaccination this calendar year.

Hochul's team said, "Schools are encouraged to continue promoting COVID-19 vaccination in their community."

"Parents and guardians can get more information about the COVID-19 vaccine by visiting our FAQ page."

"In addition to vaccination as a best practice, testing provides an opportunity to connect eligible individuals who test positive with treatment. This allows schools to mitigate community spread of COVID-19. Resources continue to be made available to schools to support testing of school populations."

"Following this guidance will help schools collaborate with local health departments to support safe, in-person learning, while providing greater flexibility to meet local community needs as COVID-19 community levels change."

In response, Senate Republican Leader Rob Ortt said, "For more than two years, Senate Republicans have been fighting alongside parents and students to end the ridiculous mandates made possible by Gov. Hochul's endless COVID-19 emergency executive authority."

"This gubernatorial power-grab has made New York students an outlier, forced to endure senseless restrictions, while their peers across the country return to a normal postpandemic environment. More and more New Yorkers are beginning to see the danger of one-party-rule governance every day."

"Today's announcement is a long-overdue victory for parents and students across New York. I am glad the governor finally heeded my call to drop COVID restrictions in schools. I now call on her to drop all the restrictions and end the emergency today."

Graphic courtesy of the governor's office.

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