The Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus is proving to be more easily transmitted than the original strain of the virus and requires renewed attention to mitigation strategies. As described in this fact sheet, there are a number of steps that schools can take to minimize exposure, transmission, and time away from school for quarantining while providing full in-person instruction for students. It is important to note that the rules for quarantining are different for those who are vaccinated and unvaccinated and for those who were masked or unmasked at the time of exposure.

To keep students and staff safe, and to avoid school disruption and lost instructional time due to exposure and quarantining, schools can engage in:

1) **Vaccination clinics** that make vaccination more accessible for eligible students and families will reduce transmission and exposure in the long run. If exposed, individuals who are vaccinated are much less likely to become infected or sick or to transmit the virus. The greatest protection for children who cannot be vaccinated is to be surrounded by adults and others who are. Furthermore, fully vaccinated students may remain in school and avoid interruptions to in-person education, even if they are exposed to someone with COVID-19, so long as they remain without symptoms. Districts can receive grants of $55,000 to set up a vaccine clinic or can [partner with statewide providers](#).

2) **Universal masking** that minimizes exposure: Masking is required in classrooms and other indoor academic settings, as well as hallways and restrooms. Many schools continue the use of masks for outdoor activities as well. Arrangements for eating at lunch time and indoor activities where masks are not feasible (e.g. swimming) should take into account the importance of distancing and ventilation to prevent transmission. For details, visit the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) [2021-22 Guidance for K12 Schools web page](#).

As described below, when exposure to a potentially infected person occurs but both people are masked, asymptomatic students do not need to be sent home for quarantine, but can be tested over the course of the coming week while they remain in school, as part of modified quarantine procedures.

3) **Stable groups and seating charts** to minimize transmission and to facilitate tracing. Some schools have been using these tools successfully to support operations and keep students in school when infections are identified. The more conscious schools are about keeping students together in stable groups within classrooms and teaching teams, the fewer potential exposures there will be in a school and the easier it will be to trace them, if they occur. There are many strategies for organizing groups and scheduling courses / activities that minimize opportunities for wide exposure. Seating charts complement other efforts by making it easy to respond quickly and efficiently if there is an exposure.
Particular care and attention to settings like lunch is important. For examples of how to create stable groups and manage lunch, see the US Department of Education’s COVID-19 Handbook, pp. 14-17 and the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence Schedules and Grouping web page.

4) Testing programs in school providing support for ready identification of cases and for the use of modified quarantine. California supports testing for schools at no-cost, providing a variety of options to fit local circumstances.

When cases are found, what are the recommendations for quarantining individuals who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19?

As noted below, quarantine recommendations vary depending on the vaccination status of the individual, where the exposure occurred, and whether both parties were masked at the time of the close contact. For details, go to the CDPH Schools Guidance, 2021-22 web page.

What constitutes an exposure?

An exposure occurs when a person has been in close contact with an infected individual within 0 to 6 feet for more than 15 minutes over a 24-hour period.

When is quarantine following an exposure recommended?

Vaccinated individuals do not need to quarantine following a known exposure if they are asymptomatic. Fully vaccinated persons are recommended to be tested 3-5 days after exposure and wear a mask in shared indoor settings for 14 days.

Unvaccinated individuals should engage in modified or standard quarantine depending on the circumstances of the exposure. Some schools use seating charts to determine specifically who has been exposed in a classroom.

What is a modified quarantine and when can it be used?

A modified quarantine uses testing and a careful watch for symptoms instead of removal from the school environment. It can be used for unvaccinated students when an exposure occurs and both parties were wearing a mask in any school setting in which students are supervised by school staff (including indoor or outdoor school settings and school buses). (As noted above, asymptomatic individuals who are vaccinated do not need to quarantine.) Those undergoing modified quarantine may continue to attend school for in-person instruction if they:

- Are asymptomatic;
- Continue to appropriately mask, as required;
- Undergo at least twice weekly testing during quarantine; and
- Refrain from extracurricular activities at school or in the community, including sports, for 7 to 10 days. (See standard quarantine duration standards).
**Testing during modified quarantine:** In general, it is recommended to test immediately after it is known that one was exposed to someone with COVID-19. Subsequent testing should occur at least 3 days apart. As per Item 9 in the [CDPH K-12 Guidance](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/PandemicProgram/COVID19/CDPH%20COVID-19%20Testing%20Guidance.pdf), quarantine can end after Day 7 if a diagnostic specimen is collected on or after Day 5 from the date of last exposure and tests negative. If a person is asymptomatic during quarantine, any FDA-approved test is acceptable for evaluation of an individual's COVID-19 status, as noted in the [CDPH testing guidance](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/PandemicProgram/COVID19/CDPH%20COVID-19%20Testing%20Guidance.pdf). This includes antigen tests and PCR tests. Individual 1:1 PCR tests are preferred, but not required. For more information about test types, see the CDPH school testing resources.

Collection of specimens for asymptomatic persons during quarantine may occur in schools, healthcare settings, or other locations supervised by school or healthcare personnel. Specimens may be processed at the point-of-care (POC) or in a laboratory. At-home testing is not currently recommended for this purpose during quarantine.

**What is a standard quarantine and when is it recommended?**

Standard quarantine is recommended for unvaccinated students exposed to someone with COVID-19 if one or both parties were not wearing a mask during a school-based exposure. Standard quarantine is also recommended for all exposures occurring outside of a school setting. Those who were exposed should get tested immediately and stay home, except to seek medical care. If they remain asymptomatic and continue daily self-monitoring for symptoms and wear a mask when around others:

- Quarantine can end after Day 10 from the date of last exposure without testing; OR
- Quarantine can end after Day 7 if a diagnostic specimen is collected after Day 5 from the date of last exposure and tests negative.