



Return to School Matrix

Criteria below represent the requirements for the return to school. These criteria apply regardless of an individual’s vaccination status or coronavirus (COVID-19) diagnosis history. Additional information is available from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC).

Important note: In accordance with District of Columbia Department of Health (DC Health) regulations, schools shall continue to enforce all requirements related to health, safety and communicable disease, including the removal of adults and students who are displaying symptoms or who have tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) (22B DCMR §§ 209.1 — 209.8). Outbreaks of 25 or more cases of COVID-19 within the school or tied to a school-based activity shall be reported to DC Health via the [SalesForce application](#). **The return criteria in the scenarios in this resource are required per DC Health regulations.**

Scenario	Criteria to Return
1. COVID-19 symptoms ¹	<p><u>Option 1: The individual is tested:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If positive, see Scenarios 2A and 2B. • If negative, see Scenario 3. <p><u>Option 2: The individual is not tested:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit documentation from a healthcare provider of an alternate diagnosis and meet standard criteria to return after illness (the individual school’s existing policies and protocols for an individual to return after illness). <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet COVID-19 symptom-based criteria to return: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individual is unable to wear a mask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At least 24 hours after the fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medication (e.g., acetaminophen, ibuprofen) and other symptoms have improved; AND ▪ After at least 10 days (i.e., on day 11) from when symptoms first started, whichever is later. ○ Individual is able to wear a mask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At least 24 hours after the fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medication and other symptoms have improved; AND ▪ After at least five days (i.e., on day 6) from when symptoms first started, whichever is later. AND ▪ <u>After ending isolation:</u> Wear a mask through day 10.

¹ Students or staff with pre-existing health conditions that present with specific COVID-19-like symptoms must not be excluded from entering the school building on the basis of those specific symptoms, if a healthcare provider has provided written or verbal documentation that those specific symptoms are not due to COVID-19.

Scenario	Criteria to Return
<p>2A. Positive COVID-19 Test Result (Antigen or NAAT²) with Symptoms and Mild Illness³</p>	<p><u>If fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and other symptoms have improved:</u>⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After at least five days (i.e., on day 6) from when symptoms first started. <p><u>If still have a fever and/or other symptoms have not improved at day 5:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After being fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and other symptoms have improved. <p><u>After ending isolation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear a mask through day 10. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the individual has access to antigen tests, they should consider using them. With two sequential negative tests 48 hours apart, the individual may remove their mask sooner than day 10. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Note: If the antigen test results are positive, the individual may still be infectious. They should continue wearing a mask and wait at least 48 hours before taking another test. Continue taking antigen tests at least 48 hours apart until they have two sequential negative results. This may mean they need to continue wearing a mask and testing beyond day 10.
<p>2B. Positive COVID-19 Test Result (Antigen or NAAT) and Individual has Moderate Illness,⁵ Severe Illness,⁶ or a Weakened Immune System</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After at least 10 days (i.e., on day 11) from when symptoms first started, provided that the student has been fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and other symptoms have improved. <p>Note: People who had severe illness or have a weakened immune system should consult with their doctor before ending isolation. Ending isolation without a viral test may not be an option for these individuals.</p>

² Please note: a PCR test is a type of NAAT (Nucleic Acid Amplification Test).

³ “Mild illness” means the individual did not have shortness of breath or the need for prescription medications.

⁴ Loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation.

⁵ “Moderate illness” means experiencing shortness of breath or having difficulty breathing.

⁶ “Severe illness” means the individual was hospitalized.

Scenario	Criteria to Return
<p>2C. Positive COVID-19 Test Result (Antigen or NAAT) <u>without Any Symptoms</u> (Asymptomatic Infection)</p>	<p><u>If individual continues to have no symptoms:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After at least five days (i.e., on day 6) from positive test. <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>After ending isolation:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wear a mask through day 10. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If the individual has access to antigen tests, they should consider using them. With two sequential negative tests 48 hours apart, the individual may remove their mask sooner than day 10. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Note: If the antigen test results are positive, the individual may still be infectious. They should continue wearing a mask and wait at least 48 hours before taking another test. Continue taking antigen tests at least 48 hours apart until they have two sequential negative results. This may mean they need to continue wearing a mask and testing beyond day 10. <p><u>If symptoms develop:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolation restarts with day 0 as the day symptoms started. See Scenarios 2A and 2B for return criteria.
<p>3. Negative COVID-19 Test Result (Antigen or NAAT) After Symptoms of COVID-19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When meet standard criteria to return after illness (the individual school's existing policies and protocols for an individual to return after illness).