



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Definition:

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Signs and Symptoms:

COVID-19 symptoms can vary with new variants and vaccination status. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Symptoms may start as mild and sometimes progress to more severe illness.

Common symptoms include: fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, loss of taste or smell, fatigue, muscle, body aches, headache, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea.

Seek medical attention right away if a child or staff member has any of the following emergency warning signs:

- Trouble breathing,
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest,
- New confusion,
- Inability to wake or stay awake.

Transmission:

The virus that causes COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2, is transmitted between people via airborne particles and droplets when people with the virus cough, sneeze, or talk. Exposure can occur when aerosol particles and small respiratory droplets are inhaled or contact exposed mucous membranes. The risk of infection generally increases with closer contact and longer durations of contact, particularly in poorly ventilated indoor or crowded settings. Activities that increase emission of respiratory fluids such as singing, cheering, or exercising, can increase risk of transmission. It is possible to get COVID-19 from touching a surface that has the virus on it and then touching your own mouth or nose.

People with COVID-19 can be infectious from 1–2 days before symptoms begin and up to 8–10 days after symptoms begin. Transmission typically occurs during the early period of infection, particularly in the 1–2 days before symptoms begin and within the first few days of symptom onset. Asymptomatic individuals can also transmit the virus.

Diagnosis:

Viral tests that detect current infection are used for COVID-19 diagnosis and include PCR, NAAT, and antigen tests. Over-the-counter antigen tests can also detect COVID-19. All tests should be FDA-approved and performed as specified by the manufacturer.

Role of the School Nurse: Prevention

- Encourage and teach prevention strategies, including:
 - Staying up to date with vaccinations
 - Practicing good hand hygiene
 - Staying home if you experience any symptoms of respiratory illness
- Keep up to date on infection prevention recommendations published at: <https://www.cdc.gov/orr/school-preparedness/infection-prevention/index.html>
- **Pay attention to Data Dashboards:** Keep track of how much virus is in your community to help assess current risk in your school and neighborhood, and to help inform your mitigation strategies <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/coronavirus/index.shtml>

Exclusions:

Students and staff with COVID-19 should be excluded from school and school-related activities until symptoms have improved and they have been fever-free (without the use of antipyretic medication) for at least 24 hours. Upon returning to school, children should use additional precautions for another 5 days. Precautions may include masking, handwashing, distancing, and improved ventilation.

Reporting Requirements:

COVID-19 is a reportable condition in Maine, and schools should report absenteeism of 15% or greater immediately to Maine CDC through the NEO reporting system. Please be ready to report whether the majority of the absences have indicated they have respiratory symptoms or whether there has been indication of positive testing.

Resources:

- US CDC COVID-19 Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/covid/about/index.html>
- Maine CDC COVID-19 Website: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/diseases-conditions/infectious-diseases/covid-19>
- US CDC Respiratory Viruses: <https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/guidance/index.html>.