



**COVID-19 Guidance for Licking County
K-12 Schools
February 28, 2022**

Introduction:

The Licking County Health Department (LCHD) has worked with local school administrators from the beginning of the 2021-22 school year to manage COVID-19 cases within schools in the county. LCHD has reviewed updated COVID-19 guidance and analyzed locally collected data. This information has been used to update COVID-19 guidance for schools in Licking County.

Vaccination:

LCHD urges all individuals that are eligible to be vaccinated against COVID-19 to receive the vaccine as soon as possible. Our department operates walk in clinics at our office, located at 675 Price Road in Newark, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:00AM to 12:00PM and 2:00PM to 4:00PM. These times are subject to change. To view our updated schedule, please visit <https://lickingcohealth.org/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine-faqs/> To view a full list of approved COVID-19 vaccine providers please visit <https://gettheshot.coronavirus.ohio.gov/>

Community Level COVID-19 Data:

LCHD has implemented updated guidance from the CDC regarding masking in indoor environments, which includes schools. The recommendations for masking are based on the Community Level of COVID-19 in Licking County. The levels can be listed as Low, Medium, or High based on several metrics. Below is a table indicating the recommendations based on the CDC's Community Level model:

COVID-19 Community level	Individual- and household-level prevention behaviors	Community-level prevention strategies (as recommended by state or local authorities)
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines and boosters• Maintain improved ventilation throughout indoor spaces when possible• Follow CDC recommendations for isolation and quarantine, including getting tested if you are exposed to COVID-19 or have symptoms of COVID-19• If you are immunocompromised or high risk for severe disease<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Have a plan for rapid testing if needed (e.g., having home tests or access to testing)- Talk to your healthcare provider about whether you are a candidate for treatments like oral antivirals, PrEP, and monoclonal antibodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distribute and administer vaccines to achieve high community vaccination coverage and ensure health equity• Maintain improved ventilation in public indoor spaces• Ensure access to testing, including through point-of-care and at-home tests for all people<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Communicate with organizations and places that serve people who are immunocompromised or at high risk for severe disease to ensure they know how to get rapid testing• Ensure access and equity in vaccination, testing, treatment, community outreach, support services for disproportionately affected populations

Medium

- If you are immunocompromised or [high risk](#) for severe disease
 - Talk to your healthcare provider about whether you need to wear a mask and take other precautions (e.g., testing)
 - Have a plan for rapid testing if needed (e.g., having home tests or access to testing)
 - Talk to your healthcare provider about whether you are a candidate for treatments like oral antivirals, PrEP, and monoclonal antibodies
- If you have household or social contact with someone at [high risk](#) for severe disease
 - consider self-testing to detect infection before contact
 - consider wearing a mask when indoors with them
- Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines and boosters
- Maintain improved ventilation throughout indoor spaces when possible
- Follow CDC recommendations for isolation and quarantine, including getting tested if you are exposed to COVID-19 or have symptoms of COVID-19
- Protect people at [high risk](#) for severe illness or death by ensuring equitable access to vaccination, testing, treatment, support services, and information
- Consider implementing screening testing or other testing strategies for people who are exposed to COVID-19 in workplaces, schools, or other community settings as appropriate
- Implement enhanced prevention measures in high-risk congregate settings (see guidance for [correctional facilities](#) and [homeless shelters](#))
- Distribute and administer vaccines to achieve high community vaccination coverage and ensure health equity
- Maintain improved ventilation in public indoor spaces
- Ensure access to testing, including through point-of-care and at-home tests for all people
 - Communicate with organizations and places that serve people who are immunocompromised or at [high risk](#) for severe disease to ensure they know how to get rapid testing
- Ensure access and equity in vaccination, testing, treatment, community outreach, support services for disproportionately affected populations

High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear a well-fitting mask¹ indoors in public, regardless of vaccination status (including in K-12 schools and other indoor community settings) • If you are immunocompromised or high risk for severe disease <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wear a mask or respirator that provides you with greater protection - Consider avoiding non-essential indoor activities in public where you could be exposed - Talk to your healthcare provider about whether you need to wear a mask and take other precautions (e.g., testing) - Have a plan for rapid testing if needed (e.g., having home tests or access to testing) - Talk to your healthcare provider about whether you are a candidate for treatments like oral antivirals, PrEP, and monoclonal antibodies • If you have household or social contact with someone at high risk for severe disease <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consider self-testing to detect infection before contact - consider wearing a mask when indoors with them • Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines and boosters • Maintain improved ventilation throughout indoor spaces when possible • Follow CDC recommendations for isolation and quarantine, including getting tested if you are exposed to COVID-19 or have symptoms of COVID-19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider setting-specific recommendations for prevention strategies based on local factors • Implement healthcare surge support as needed • Protect people at high risk for severe illness or death by ensuring equitable access to vaccination, testing, treatment, support services, and information • Consider implementing screening testing or other testing strategies for people who are exposed to COVID-19 in workplaces, schools, or other community settings as appropriate • Implement enhanced prevention measures in high-risk congregate settings (see guidance for correctional facilities and homeless shelters) • Distribute and administer vaccines to achieve high community vaccination coverage and ensure health equity • Maintain improved ventilation in public indoor spaces • Ensure access to testing, including through point-of-care and at-home tests for all people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communicate with organizations and places that serve people who are immunocompromised or at high risk for severe disease to ensure they know how to get rapid testing • Ensure access and equity in vaccination, testing, treatment, community outreach, support services for disproportionately affected populations
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Community Level COVID-19 Metrics:

The CDC has developed a set of metrics to determine the Community Level of COVID-19 in each county in the United States. The metrics will be updated weekly, and each county’s Community Level will also be updated weekly. LCHD will monitor local data related to these metrics closely. The goal is to ensure the Community Level is reflected as accurately as possible based on local data. There may be instances when local data conflicts with the CDC’s data. If this occurs, LCHD will make a determination of the Community Level based on locally collected data.

Below are the CDC's Community Level Metrics:

COVID-19 Community Levels – Use the Highest Level that Applies to Your Community				
New COVID-19 Cases Per 100,000 people in the past 7 days	Indicators	Low	Medium	High
Fewer than 200	New COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population (7-day total)	<10.0	10.0-19.9	≥20.0
	Percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients (7-day average)	<10.0%	10.0-14.9%	≥15.0%
200 or more	New COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population (7-day total)	NA	<10.0	≥10.0
	Percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients (7-day average)	NA	<10.0%	≥10.0%

Masks:

Based on this guidance, when the Community Level in Licking County is at Low or Medium, masks will not be recommended in schools, or other indoor environments. Individuals at an increased risk of COVID-19 should speak to their healthcare provider regarding when to wear a mask. When the Community Level of COVID-19 in Licking County is at High, LCHD will recommend masks be worn in schools until the level returns to Low or Medium.

LCHD does not have the authority to require masks be worn in schools. Schools can require staff and students wear masks in their buildings, and this is done at the school district level or in each individual private school.

Isolation:

If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, they will be required to isolate for **5 days** from the date their symptoms started, or if they do not have symptoms, for **5 days** from the date of their positive test. This includes individuals that are vaccinated against COVID-19.

- If the individual has no symptoms or their symptoms are resolving **after 5 days**, their isolation period will end, and they can return to normal activities. However, these individuals should wear a mask for 5 additional days.
- If the individual has **a fever** after 5 days, they should continue to isolate until their fever resolves.

Quarantine:

Students and staff that are exposed to COVID-19 and meet the definition of a close contact can return to school immediately following their exposure, and they should wear a mask for 10 days after their exposure. If these individuals develop COVID-19 symptoms they should isolate at home and be tested for COVID-19.

LCHD will not send quarantine notices to parents of students exposed to COVID-19 in school.

Social Distancing:

Schools should attempt to provide social distancing of at least 3 feet between desks whenever possible. Efforts should also be taken to maximize spacing during lunch periods. Additionally, distancing should be implemented to the extent possible in other settings such as, locker rooms, extracurricular activities, etc.

Hand Hygiene:

LCHD also continues to recommend frequent and proper hand washing for all individuals. Washing your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds can help reduce the spread of many diseases including COVID-19.

Enhanced Cleaning:

Schools should continue to implement the enhanced cleaning activities that were implemented during last school year. This should include high touch surfaces and other areas where COVID-19 can be spread.

COVID-19 School Data:

LCHD continues to review locally collected school COVID-19 data daily, and changes in this guidance document are based on this analysis. The data has also been used to recommend interventions in school buildings where an increase in COVID-19 cases has been identified. Increases in COVID-19 cases are evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and the recommendation of interventions is based on the data collection and discussions with school leaders to gain a true understanding of each specific situation. This process will continue during the 2021-22 school year, and LCHD will continue to communicate with school leaders on a regular basis regarding COVID-19.

Conclusion:

LCHD understands the importance of in person learning for students and staff members across the county. Our staff has worked extremely hard to assist county schools with holding in person classes since the school year began. We will continue to monitor the data and communicate with school leaders to make the 2021-2022 school year as safe and effective as possible.