

# Best Practice COVID-19 Workplace Safety: Schools

Factsheet | Version 4.0 | 13 October 2022

This information provides best practice guidance to help schools manage COVID-19, influenza and other respiratory viruses, safely.

**Please use this information alongside other Tasmanian Public Health guidance including *Best Practice COVID-19 Safety: for Employers*.**

Public Health recommends all workplaces comply with work health and safety requirements and:

- undertake a COVID-19 risk assessment
- develop and maintain policies and procedures to minimise the chances of COVID-19 and other infectious illnesses spreading within the workplace
- use best practice guidance to inform those policies and procedures.

## Public Health recommendations for people with symptoms

To reduce the risk from COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses it is recommended that:

- anyone with acute (or new) respiratory symptoms including fever, cough, sore throat and/or runny nose should stay home or away from others
- testing for COVID-19 is still important to help reduce the spread of illness and enable those who are at risk of severe disease access treatments

If people test positive to COVID-19 they should:

- stay home until their acute symptoms have resolved
- not attend hospitals, residential aged or disability care facilities, as workers or visitors, for at least 7 days after their positive result
- avoid large gatherings and indoor crowded places for at least 7 days
- inform Public Health of your positive result if they tested positive on a rapid antigen test (RAT)
- let their workplace they have tested positive - workplaces may have policies in place for the return to work of cases and close contacts of COVID-19
- wear a mask when indoors and on public transport if they must leave home.
- **If people test positive to COVID-19 but still have symptoms** they should stay at home or away from others until their symptoms have resolved completely or have significantly improved. There are other respiratory viruses, including influenza viruses, that

can cause serious illness in some people, and spread easily from person to person.

- If some mild symptoms remain, Public Health recommends they wear a face mask in indoor settings and on public transport.

If anyone with COVID-19 is concerned or unsure if their symptoms are improving, they should seek medical advice.

## Best practice COVID-19 control measures for schools

### 1. Planning

- Maintain and use your COVID-19 safety plan.
- Maintain your COVID-19 outbreak management plan and consider including influenza within its scope. See the *Case and Outbreak Management Framework for Tasmanian Settings* and related tools.
- Stay informed about the level of risk in the local community and control measures in place or recommended.

### 2. Vaccination

See *Best Practice Guidance for Workplaces: Vaccination*.

COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for people aged five years and older, including pregnant women and for those aged between 6 months and 5 years at risk of severe illness.

Influenza vaccine is recommended for everyone aged six months and older, including pregnant women.

- Recommend workers and families be up to date with vaccination against COVID-19 and influenza.

### 3. Workers and students with symptoms

- Recommend workers and students (including through their parents/carers) with any respiratory symptoms (including fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose) to stay home and get tested for COVID-19.
- Maintain policies and procedures to manage students who develop signs of respiratory illness while at school. This includes requesting that students with symptoms are collected as soon as practicable.
- While students with symptoms await collection:
  - > support them to distance from other students

- > provide and ask them to wear a single-use surgical face mask (for children aged 12 years or older, and younger children who are happy to wear a mask)

#### 4. Workers and students who test positive for COVID-19 or are close contacts of someone who has COVID-19

- Remind workers and students/families that people who have symptoms or test positive to COVID-19 should stay home until their symptoms resolve
- Remind Close contacts to stay home if they have any symptoms, to wear a mask indoors and on public transport and to avoid contact with individuals at high risk of severe disease
- Recommend close contacts aged 12 years or older at the school wear a face mask in indoor spaces (unless exempt).

#### 5. Ventilation

- See *Best Practice Guidance for Workplaces: Ventilation*.
- Spend time outside and open doors and windows as safe and practicable.
- Maintain and use air conditioners, heaters and other mechanical ventilation devices, as safe and appropriate.

#### 6. Face masks

- See *Best Practice Guidance for Workplaces: Face masks*.
- Maintain a supply of single-use surgical face masks for workers and students.
- Support use of face masks by anyone who chooses to wear a mask or who is at risk of severe illness.
- Encourage use of face masks by anyone who develops symptoms of COVID-19 while on the school site.

#### 7. Support people at risk of severe illness

Those at risk of severe illness includes people who are not up to date with vaccination, people with specific underlying medical conditions, people with compromised immune systems, people aged 65 years and older, and pregnant women.

- Identify workers at risk of severe illness from COVID-19 and strategies to minimise their risk of exposure to the virus.
- Record and take account of medical advice for any student at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

#### 8. Physical distancing, hygiene and cleaning

- See *Best Practice Guidance for Workplaces: Physical Distancing* and *Best Practice Guidance for Workplaces: Hygiene and Cleaning*.
- Remind adults in the setting to physically distance from each other, when feasible. In a school learning environment, physical distancing is most important between adults.
- Discourage gathering of parents at indoor arrival and departure points.
- Have processes in place to ensure hygiene practices are in line with national school standards.
- Support students to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue then put the tissue in the rubbish, or to cover coughs and sneezes with the inside of their elbow rather than their hands.
- Teach and support students to wash their hands effectively with soap and running water on arrival, before/after meals and after toileting, blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing and using shared equipment.
- Ensure alcohol-based hand gel, tissues and rubbish bins are readily available.
- Ensure appropriate cleaning and disinfection, with a focus on frequently touched surfaces. *Cleaning and disinfection of toys and equipment is not required after every use.*

### Further information

- [www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au](http://www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au)
- Public Health
  - > email: [public.health@health.tas.gov.au](mailto:public.health@health.tas.gov.au)
  - > phone: 1800 671 738
- Tasmanian Schools COVID-19 Operational Plan

The management of COVID-19 continues to evolve, and as evidence accumulates, advice may be revised. Updates are available at [www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au](http://www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au). If any information in this factsheet is inconsistent with information on that website, please use the information online.