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MARIN COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

Respiratory Illness Guidance for Schools & Child Care

Influenza • COVID-19 • RSV • Other Common Respiratory Viruses | Updated August 2026

What changed: CDPH now uses a unified approach for managing contagious respiratory illnesses in schools and childcare. For respiratory illness, instead of having separate rules for each disease, guidance for return to school or childcare is based on the individual's symptoms. [See the current CDPH TK-12 & Child Care Guidance for full details.](#)

1. Everyday prevention

- Encourage recommended immunizations for influenza, COVID-19, and RSV when eligible.
- Improve indoor air quality: bring in outdoor air when safe and use effective ventilation/filtration.
- Support hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette; routinely clean facilities.
- Use a well-fitting mask as an added layer, especially when sick, during outbreaks, or around people at higher risk.

2. When a student or staff member is sick

- **Stay home** and away from others when respiratory symptoms are present.
- **Return when BOTH are true:**
 - Symptoms are improving overall
 - AND
 - Fever has been gone for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medicine.
- If fever returns or symptoms worsen after returning, stay home again until the return criteria above are met.

3. Testing & treatment

- Testing can help guide treatment and precautions. It is especially important for people at higher risk for severe illness or who may expose someone at higher risk.
- People at higher risk should contact a healthcare provider early; antiviral treatment for COVID-19 or influenza works best when started promptly.

**ARI is defined as the following symptoms (not better explained by chronic conditions, e.g., seasonal allergies): fever or chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, difficulty breathing, body aches*

4. Report respiratory illness clusters to MCPH

Individual respiratory-virus cases at expected levels for the season do not require notification to MCPH. Report clusters/outbreaks using Marin County thresholds below or contact MCPH anytime you suspect an outbreak or need assistance.

TK-12 SCHOOLS / CHILD CARE / PRESCHOOL

- 10% or more of the total population of students and staff, facility-wide, with acute respiratory illness (ARI)* within a 3-day period.
- OR**
- 20% or more of students and staff in an epidemiologically linked group (such as a single classroom, sports team, or after-school group) with ARI* with a minimum of 5 ill, within a 3-day period.

5. Contact Marin County Public Health

Send an email to report respiratory illness clusters, anytime you suspect an outbreak, or if you need assistance. Please include in your report:

- School name & point of contact
- Total number of affected individuals (students & staff)
- Total census of school and affected classrooms (if applicable)

Schools: HHSSchools@marincounty.gov

Child Care: HHSCildcare@marincounty.gov

Phone: 415-473-2398

For non-respiratory communicable diseases: follow disease-specific CDPH guidance and reporting/exclusion requirements.

- [CDPH Public Health Guidance for TK-12 Schools & Child Care](#)
- [MCPH Disease Reporting Guidance, Exposure Notices, & Fact Sheets for Schools and Child Care](#)