



Important Testing Guidance for Respiratory Illness *updated August 23, 2021*

Background

Denver Department of Public Health and Environment (DDPHE) has recently reported an increase in non-COVID respiratory viruses, including respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) circulating in Colorado. SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 is still circulating in Colorado, including Denver County. Co-infection with multiple respiratory viruses is possible. A positive test for any other respiratory pathogen (e.g. influenza, RSV, etc.) should not be used to “rule out” infection with COVID-19. **Public health recommends that patients presenting with respiratory illnesses are tested for COVID-19 in addition to other respiratory pathogens.**

How illness is spread

Germs that cause respiratory illnesses are easily spread from person to person by droplets produced by coughing and sneezing. These germs can spread when healthy persons are in close contact with a sick person. Healthy persons may become infected by touching an object or surface with germs on it and then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.

How to stop the spread

- Keep your child home when they feel sick.
- Teach your child to wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Encourage your child to wear a well-fitted cloth face covering when you are around others you don't live with or when you're out in public.
- Practice cough and sneeze etiquette by covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing or coughing, throwing the tissue in the closest garbage can, and washing your hands after you throw it away. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands.

What to do if your child has symptoms

- Keep children with symptoms of illness home from preschool
- DCP school policy requires children with any of the following symptoms to be excluded from preschool until “Return to Learn” criteria are met:
 - Any of the following symptoms **lasting longer than 24 hours:**
 - Feeling feverish, having chills, temperature of 100.4°F or higher, new or worsening cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, loss of taste or smell
 - Any of the following symptoms **lasting longer than 48 hours:**
 - Sore throat, runny nose or congestion, muscle or body aches, headache, fatigue, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea
- Unchanged, usual symptoms of a known chronic condition should not prompt exclusion unless indicated by the school’s regular illness policies.

“Return to Learn” Criteria

- Children with any symptoms listed above must be excluded from care until:
 - Child receives a negative COVID-19 test (PCR or other molecular test) *and* symptoms are resolved or improved OR
 - Child completes a 10-day home isolation period and has been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication
- **Individuals with symptoms and exposure (close contact with a person with COVID-19) within 14 days prior to feeling first symptoms should not use “Return to Learn” and should follow local public health guidance for isolation.**
- **Individuals diagnosed with non-COVID illness may have additional exclusion criteria. Please email Mary Nelson at mary@dcpplay.org in this instance to determine when your child may return to preschool.**

Please take this letter with you if your child is seen by their healthcare provider. We appreciate your support and help in protecting our community from COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses.

To find a free COVID-19 test site near you, please visit:

<https://covidcheckcolorado.org>

For information on current COVID-19 circulation in Denver county, please visit:

<https://www.denverpublichealth.org/clinics-services/infectious-disease-clinic/coronavirus-disease-2019/denver-metro-covid19-data-summary>