

Department of Elementary & Secondary Education

Frequently Asked Questions, Week of January 11th, 2021

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Does an individual who tested positive for COVID-19 have to self-isolate until their sense of smell or taste returns?

The CDC notes that loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation.¹ As outlined in DESE's [Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios](#), most people who test positive and have a relatively mild illness will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days. People who test positive can resume public activities after 10 days and once they have:

- Gone for 24 hours without a fever (and without taking fever-reducing medications like Tylenol),
- Experienced improvement in other symptoms (for example, their cough has gotten much better), and
- Received clearance from public health authority contact tracers (the local board of health or Community Tracing Collaborative).

This means an individual may be cleared to return to school even if their loss of taste and/or smell is not yet improved or resolved, provided the other criteria above are met.

2. An individual returns to school after the required self-isolation due to a positive COVID-19 test. If the same individual is then identified as a close contact, do they have to quarantine?

Decisions about who needs to quarantine after exposure to an individual with COVID-19 are determined by the local board of health and/or the contact tracers with the Community tracing collaborative. As outlined in CDC guidance,² an individual who had confirmed COVID-19 (diagnosed by a positive PCR test) and then becomes a close contact of someone with COVID-19 may not need to quarantine if:

- The exposure is within 90 days of their own illness
- The exposed individual is recovered and remains without COVID symptoms.

Individuals who are asked to quarantine must follow the guidance outlined in DESE's [Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios](#).

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-home-isolation.html>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-home-isolation.html>