**Health and Safety for 2023 - 2024**

As the new school year is about to begin, DMPS wants to share some guidance around illnesses, including COVID-19, to keep our schools healthy and safe. The health and well-being of our students and staff is always a top priority, and every DMPS building has a school nurse assigned to assist students and staff with health matters. They work closely with our local and state health departments to monitor and respond to illness trends. Together, we can all help make sure the 2023-2024 school year gets off to a healthy start.

**Please follow these general steps to help keep our schools healthy during 2023-2024:**

**GENERAL ILLNESS GUIDANCE**

* Stay home when sick.
* Individuals should remain home until symptoms are improved.
* Individuals must be free from fever, diarrhea, or vomiting for 24 hours.
* Notify the school nurse with significant health needs or concerns.

**COVID-19**

* Everyone should be aware that exposure to the COVID-19 virus could happen at any time monitor for symptoms accordingly. Experts believe we will continue to see periodic waves of infection, and reinfections are common.
* Iowa HHS includes COVID-19 on its list of common [Child Illnesses and Exclusion Criteria](https://hhs.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/idphfiles/Common_Child_Illnesses_9_22%20%282%29.pdf).
* Monitor community trends, [understand exposure risks](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/risks-exposure.html), and utilize available [prevention tools](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html):
  + We encourage all ages 6 months and older to remain up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations. More information available [here](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html).
  + Keep a supply of rapid tests at home for use when sick or exposed. Repeat the test in 48 hours if negative but symptoms are present. Rapid tests are available at the pharmacy and other testing options are outlined [here](https://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/health-department/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/covid-19-test-kits/).
  + Talk with your doctor about [treatment options](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/treatments-for-severe-illness.html) if you test positive and have risk factors.
  + Masks are optional at DMPS school buildings and facilities unless a person is under [isolation guidance](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/isolation.html).
* When testing positive or exposed, DMPS asks all people to follow established isolation and exposure guidance.
  + What you need to know:
    - Individuals testing positive must isolate at home days 0-5 (day 0 is first day of symptoms or test date if symptoms never develop) and mask around others when returning to school days 6-10. [CDC isolation calculator](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/isolation.html)
    - Exposed persons are encouraged to mask around others for 10 days and test at least 5 full days after exposure or if symptoms develop. [CDC exposure guidance](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/if-you-were-exposed.html)
  + Download either of the following PDFs for information about exposure to COVID-19 and positive test results:
    - [Information about COVID-19 exposure](https://www.dmschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/DMPS-Exposure-Handout-FINAL-August-2023.pdf)
    - [Information about COVID-19 positive test results](https://www.dmschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/DMPS-Individual-Positive-Handout-FINAL-August-2023.pdf)
  + Contact your school nurse if you have additional questions or concerns about isolation, exposure, or returning after infection.