



# COVID-19 Prevention at TK-12 Schools

## Information for Students, Parents & Guardians

Elementary, middle, and high schools can reopen in Los Angeles County by following the [Reopening Protocol for K-12 Schools](#). This protocol lists rules and recommendations for schools to follow that put in place many layers of protection to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and allow a safe return to full, in-person schooling. Schools have been working closely with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health to create environments that promote safety. In addition, a [Health Officer Order](#) was issued by the State of California on August 11, 2021 that requires all school staff to either show proof of full vaccination or be tested at least once per week.

Parents and guardians can prepare their children for school by understanding the COVID-19 safety rules and recommendations. Explain to your children what they can expect when they return to school. This will help ensure a safe and successful school year.

### For the safety of everyone, schools will require that:

#### Everyone, regardless of vaccination status, must wear a mask indoors.

- This includes in all school buildings, public and school transportation (e.g., school buses and vans), and during indoor PE classes.
- Students are allowed to take off their mask while actively:
  - Eating, drinking, showering, swimming, or napping.
- **People who should not wear a mask.** Children younger than 2 years (24 months) should not wear a mask. People with certain medical or mental health conditions or disabilities should not wear a mask if instructed by their doctor. Mask exemptions at school that are due to a medical or mental health condition, disability, or hearing impairment must be made by a licensed physician or other medical professional working under a physician license. Self-attestation and parental attestation for mask exemptions will not be accepted. Those with a medical mask exemption must wear a face shield with a drape along the bottom to cover the neck area, if their condition allows it.
- To learn more about mask wearing visit [ph.lacounty.gov/masks](https://ph.lacounty.gov/masks).

#### Students should not come to school if they are sick or under isolation or quarantine orders.

- Children who have a fever or show other signs of being sick should not be sent to school. For symptoms of COVID-19 see [ph.lacounty.gov/covidcare](https://ph.lacounty.gov/covidcare).
- Students may be screened for symptoms and have their temperature taken when they arrive at school. They will not be allowed to enter if they show signs of being sick. If a student begins to have COVID-19 symptoms later in the day, they will be isolated from others and may be sent home.
- Plan ahead. Have an emergency childcare plan in place so that if your child gets sick, they are able to safely stay home from school.



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### Schools may choose to require additional safety steps.

The following safety steps are meant to further reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 by allowing for physical distancing, reduced crowding, and increased ventilation. Everyone must follow the rules set by the school. Be sure to check with your child's school to learn more about what safety steps they have in place.

#### Schools may choose to have:

- **Modified or staggered schedules** to reduce crowding in hallways.
- **Assigned groups** of students and teachers that stay together for most activities throughout the day.
- **Open windows and doors in classrooms** to increase good air flow and ventilation.
- **Routine periodic testing for COVID-19 in students with no symptoms ("screening")**. Or the school may arrange testing only for students who have COVID-19 symptoms or who are close contacts to someone else with COVID-19.
- **Masks worn in crowded outdoor spaces**. This may include during drop-off or pick-up, on the playground, or any place where a lot of people may crowd together.
- **Classes and meals outdoors**, especially for activities that have a higher risk of spreading COVID-19. This includes physical education, music, theater, dance, and singing classes. Music activities that require the removal of a face mask (like playing wind instruments) may be held as a group activity outdoors.
- **Performances, sports competitions and games outdoors**. Schools should follow the [Best Practices for Mega Events](#) and [Best Practices for smaller venues](#).

### Children can take more safety steps to reduce their risk in school.

In addition to following their school's safety rules, there are other things your child can do while in school to help reduce their risk.

- **Get vaccinated** if they are 5 years of age or older.
  - Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect your child against COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective, and free to everyone. Talk with your child's doctor about any concerns.
- **Wear their mask in crowded outdoor spaces**.
  - This includes while waiting in line to enter, exit, or during recess.
- **Get the most protection out of their mask**.
  - The most protective mask is one that your child will be comfortable wearing *over their nose and mouth* at all times indoors. The mask should fit snugly against their nose and chin with no large gaps around the side of their face. It should be made of at least two layers of tightly woven breathable material.
  - There are some types of masks that provide higher levels of protection. Learn more at [ph.lacounty.gov/masks](http://ph.lacounty.gov/masks). Be aware, as the levels of mask protection go up, the harder it can be for your child to comfortably wear that mask all day.
  - It is a good idea to have your child test out masks at home to make sure they can breathe comfortably and will be able to wear for the full school day. Have them wear the mask indoors for at least a few hours at a time at home.
  - Send your child to school with extra masks so they can change their mask should it get very soiled or wet.
- **Keep their distance from others**.

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- Talk with your child about avoiding crowds of students. They should try to stay at least 2 arms lengths away from others (about 6 feet) when possible, outside the classroom.
- Anytime they are around others and masks are off (such as during meals), they should keep their distance.
- **Practice good hand hygiene.**
  - They should wash their hands often with soap and water or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Small children should only use alcohol hand sanitizer with adult supervision. This is to make sure they do not eat any or put their hands in their mouth before it dries.
  - Remind them to avoid eating food and touching their face with unclean hands.

For more tips, see [Keeping Safe and Preventing Spread for Parents with Unvaccinated Children](#).

For Parents and Guardians, learn more about how to reduce your risk and slow the spread of COVID-19 including which situations are riskier, visit <http://ph.lacounty.gov/reducerisk>

### Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect against COVID-19.

Vaccinations are free and available to everyone age 5 and over, regardless of immigration status. Vaccines are widely available across LA County without an appointment. In-home vaccination is available to people who cannot leave their home.

Visit [VaccinateLACounty.com](https://www.vaccinatelacounty.com) and click on "[How To Get Vaccinated](#)" to find a location near you or call the **Public Health Vaccine Call Center** at **833-540-0473**, open daily 8:00 am to 8:30 pm.

