

**ODH/CCBH Mask to Stay/Test to Play Option
Frequently Asked Questions
ESC of Northeast Ohio
(with December 2021 CDC/ODH Updates)**

1. In what instances can the Mask to Stay/Test to Play option be used?

The Mask to Stay/Test to Play option can be used only for students and staff who are exposed and defined as **close contacts within a K-12 school or school activity setting** (including classrooms, buses, lunch and extracurricular activities) and **only while they are participating in the same K-12 school or school activity setting**. This means:

- These eligible students or staff may participate in school or a school activity but **must still quarantine from other social/community settings and activities** for at least 5 days followed by 5 days of masking. The quarantine must continue beyond 5 days if symptoms occur or persist.
- Students and staff who are **exposed outside of the K-12 school** setting are considered close contacts if they were unvaccinated and within 6 feet of the positive case for 15 minutes or more within a 24-hour period, regardless of masking.
- Students and staff who are **exposed and considered close contacts outside of the K-12 school setting** must quarantine for at least 5 days, followed by 5 days of masking. The quarantine must continue beyond 5 days if symptoms occur or persist.

2. Are both students and staff eligible to participate in the Mask to Stay/Test to Play option?

Yes, both students and staff are eligible to participate in the Mask to Stay/Test to Play option.

3. What are the requirements for an individual to participate in the Mask to Stay option?

If a student or staff member is defined as a close contact in a school setting and the school has opted to allow for the Mask to Stay option, they may elect to participate in the Mask to Stay Option, rather than quarantining at home. They may only participate in this option if they are asymptomatic and either:

- **Wear a mask consistently while in school for 10 days** after exposure, except while eating during lunch
- **Testing is recommended** on day 5 after exposure
- After completing either masking protocol, the student or staff can end their quarantine period and resume normal activities

These individuals should also monitor (or parents should monitor) for symptoms of COVID and isolate and get tested if they start to develop *any* symptoms associated with COVID.

4. How are students participating in the Mask to Stay/Test to Play option expected to wear masks during lunch?

Students participating in the Mask to Stay/Test to Play option are expected to **wear masks to the extent possible** during the lunch period, but not while they are eating or drinking. Removing the masks in order to eat does not disqualify them from participating in the Mask to Stay/Test to Play option.

5. What are the requirements for an individual to participate in the Test to Play option?

If a student or staff member is defined as a close contact in a school setting, they may also elect to participate in the Test to Play option in order to continue to participate in/advise/coach school-based extracurricular activities. They may only participate in this option if they are asymptomatic and follow *all* steps of the protocol below.

1. Receive negative **COVID test within 24 hours** of being notified of exposure within the K-12 school setting
2. If the test is positive, individual must isolate at home for 5 days from the date of the test and notify the school who should begin contact tracing.
3. For 10-day period, **the individual must wear a mask at all times, except during active play**, including on buses, sidelines and in locker rooms.
4. If at any time the student or staff develop symptoms, they are no longer eligible to continue in the Test to Play and must remain at home until another test confirms they are negative.

6. Can individuals participating in Test to Play continue to play while they wait for the results of their COVID test?

Yes, individuals can continue to play while they wait for the results of their test, as long as they wear a mask at all times except during active play or practice, including on buses, locker rooms and sidelines.

7. Can a rapid PCR or antigen test to be used to meet the requirements of Mask to Stay/Test to Play?

Yes, a rapid PCR or antigen test may be used. This can either be performed at a pharmacy or doctor's office or at home with a test bought from a pharmacy or obtained elsewhere (i.e. school, library, etc.). However, if the test is done at home, it must be completed with the virtual proctor who can observe the process.

8. Does this change who we include on the contact tracing line list?

No, this does not change who is considered a close contact or included on the contact tracing line list. For the purposes of school exposure, a close contact is defined as an unvaccinated student who was either:

- Masked and less than 3 feet from the positive case for 15 minutes or more in a 24-hour period
- Unmasked and less than 6 feet from the positive case for 15 minutes or more in a 24-hour period

Close contacts are the only ones who should be included on the contact tracing line list. These individuals will receive a quarantine order from the board of health. This now provides those who receive a quarantine order another option to limit time out of school as long as they meet the required criteria.

9. How does this apply to vaccinated students?

Vaccinated individuals are not considered close contacts and, therefore, would not be on a contact tracing line list or receive a quarantine order from the board of health with this option. Therefore, vaccinated individuals do not need to follow this protocol in order to remain in school after exposure. However, the following precautions continue to be recommended for vaccinated individuals after exposure:

- Monitor symptoms for 14 days
- Wear a mask for 10 days after exposure, except while eating or actively participating in an athletic activity *or*
- If symptomatic, remain at home and receive COVID testing
- If positive, isolate for 5 days from the date of symptoms or positive test (whichever is earlier) and notify the school so they can begin contact tracing

10. Does this mean that schools are no longer following ORC 3707.16, which requires districts to exclude individuals from school if they receive a quarantine order from the board of health?

No. ORC 3707.16 states that a school must exclude individuals “declared by the board of health to *require* to quarantine.” The board of health will now be able to include the Mask to Stay/Test to Play option within the quarantine order, which means the individual may not be “required” to quarantine from school, as long as they meet the requirements to participate in Mask to Stay/Test to Play and, therefore, the district will be not required to exclude them from school if they participate in the Mask to Stay/Test to Play option and will therefore still be following ORC 3707.16.