

A message from the Lunenburg Board of Health.....

The number of COVID-19 cases in Lunenburg has increased over the past three weeks. This increase in cases has the potential to impact the school system, our families and our ability to interact with others.

What happens in our homes affects our community. Household spread of the disease accounts for the largest number of disease clusters in the State. Protecting your family from the disease can reduce the likelihood of transmission in schools.

The Board of Health would like to remind Lunenburg residents of steps that can be taken to reduce the number of COVID-19 infections.

Get vaccinated when you are eligible; the vaccine helps protect against illness from the disease and drastically reduces the severity of the disease and likelihood of hospitalization for those who become infected. Information on vaccination locations can be found at: www.mass.gov/covidvaccine.

YOU have the power to stop the spread

- Keep your distance: at work, at school, and at play (6' from others if possible)
- Avoid gatherings of individuals who are not members of your immediate household.
- Wear a mask
- Wash your hands
- Feel sick?
 - Get tested. Click on <https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-testing>
 - Stay at home until you get your results.
 - If you test positive, please answer the call of the contact tracer; it will be your local health department or the Department of Public Health's Contact Tracing Collaborative (CTC); the call from CTC comes through as "MA COVID team"
 - Follow the instructions of the contact tracer; the instructions for isolation and quarantine can be found at www.mass.gov/isol8
 - If you feel ill and you haven't tested positive for COVID-19, stay home until you are well.

COVID-19 and Schools

The Department of Public Health (DPH) and Department of Early and Secondary Education (DESE) have created protocols to allow K-12 schools to open. (<https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/protocols/protocols.pdf>). These protocols rely on actions taken by the School Department to minimize the potential for spread in the school buildings and families' cooperation on assessing their child's health conditions (as well as the family's) and following the isolation and quarantine instructions established in the protocol.

The DPH has not changed the definition of a close contact for the purpose of quarantine; but in working with DESE they have provided exemptions to the close contact definition based on the measures schools are taking to prevent the spread of the disease (testing, masks, ventilation etc.) The differences are outlined below.

- 1.) Exposure to a person who tests positive for COVID-19 in the community, that meets the definition of a close contact (contact with a COVID-19 positive individual for 15 minutes (can be cumulative in a 24-hour period, at less than 6', indoor) results in the individual needing to quarantine in accordance with the DPH quarantine guidance.
- 2.) Exposures which occur in a K-12 school setting shall follow the DPH/DESE protocols, which provide exemptions to the testing and quarantine responses outlined in the protocol:
 - a.) Asymptomatic, fully vaccinated close contacts are exempt in the K-12 school setting.
 - b.) Classroom close contacts, where the individuals are at least 3' apart, while both individuals were wearing masks, are exempt in the K-12 school setting.
 - c.) Bus close contacts, if individuals were masked while on the bus and the windows were open, are exempt in the K-12 school setting.
- 3.) If the school participates in the DESE "Test and Stay" program (for information on Test and Stay go to page 7 of the DPH/DESE protocol document), the school staff and students, who are not exempt as noted above, can remain in school as long as they participate in the regular testing at school and remain asymptomatic.
- 4.) School staff and students who participate in the "Test and Stay" program in school, due to an exposure to a COVID-19 positive individual at school, need to follow the DPH quarantine guidance when they are not in school.
- 5.) Those whose exposure to a COVID-19 positive individual was outside the school setting aren't eligible for the school's "Test and Stay" program and must following the DPH quarantine guidance.