

## Norwood Public Schools Respiratory Virus Guidelines

On March 25, 2024 we were informed that **Massachusetts Department of Public Health** recently updated their guidance:

[Staying home to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/staying-home-to-prevent-the-spread-of-respiratory-viruses)

This guidance aligns with recent CDC [updated recommendations for respiratory viruses](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2024/s0301-respiratory-viruses.html), including COVID-19 which were released on March 1, 2024

This guidance is for respiratory viruses like [Influenza](#), [RSV](#), and [Covid-19](#) as they share similar transmission methods, symptoms, and prevention strategies. This unified approach aims to simplify recommendation and address common risks more effectively.

**Respiratory Virus Guidance Snapshot**

**Core prevention strategies**

- Immunizations**: Illustration of a woman with her arm raised for a vaccine.
- Hygiene**: Illustration of a woman washing her hands at a sink.
- Steps for Cleaner Air**: Illustration of a window with a fan and a plant.
- Treatment**: Illustration of a man on a phone with a pill bottle.
- Stay Home and Prevent Spread\***: Illustration of a woman in bed being cared for.

**Additional prevention strategies**

- Masks**: Illustration of a person wearing a face mask.
- Distancing**: Illustration of two people with a distance arrow between them.
- Tests**: Illustration of a person using a rapid test kit.

**\*Stay home and away from others until, for 24 hours BOTH:**

- Your symptoms are getting better
- You are fever-free (without meds)

**Then take added precaution for the next 5 days**

**Layering prevention strategies can be especially helpful when:**

- ✓ Respiratory viruses are causing a lot of illness in your community
- ✓ You or those around you have risk factors for severe illness
- ✓ You or those around you were recently exposed, are sick, or are recovering

The new CDC guidance for respiratory virus:

- When you have **ANY respiratory virus** - stay home and away from others if you have respiratory virus symptoms. These symptoms can include fever, chills, fatigue, cough, runny nose, and headache, among others.
- Return to normal activities when, for at least 24 hours, both are true:
  - Your symptoms are getting better overall, and
  - You have not had a fever (and are not using fever-reducing medication)
- When you go back to your normal activities, take added precaution over the next 5 days, such as taking additional steps for [cleaner air](#), [hygiene](#), [masks](#), [physical distancing](#), and/or [testing](#) when you will be around other people indoors.
  - Keep in mind that you may still be able to spread the virus that made you sick, even if you are feeling better. You are likely to be less contagious at this time, depending on factors like how long you were sick or how sick you were.

## HOW HAS ISOLATION GUIDANCE CHANGED?

The updated Respiratory Virus Guidance recommends that people stay home and away from others until at least 24 hours after both their symptoms are getting better overall, and they have not had a fever (and are not using fever-reducing medication). Note that depending on the length of symptoms, this period could be shorter, the same, or longer than the previous guidance for COVID-19.

It is important to note that the guidance doesn't end with staying home and away from others when sick. The guidance encourages added precaution over the next five days after time at home, away from others, is over. Since some people remain contagious beyond the "stay-at-home" period, a period of added precaution using prevention strategies, such as taking more steps for cleaner air, enhancing hygiene practices, wearing a well-fitting mask, keeping a distance from others, and/or getting tested for respiratory viruses can lower the chance of spreading respiratory viruses to others.

We considered multiple options for adjusting isolation guidance at different lengths of time. In addition to fewer people getting seriously ill from COVID-19 and having better tools to fight serious illness, CDC considered other factors such as the personal and societal costs of extended isolation as well as the timing of when people are most likely to spread the virus (a few days before and after symptoms appear). The updated guidance is easy-to-understand, practical, and evidence-based, as well as more aligned with long-standing recommendations for other respiratory illnesses.

In addition to CDC's Respiratory Virus Guidance, there are [several special considerations](#) for people with certain risk factors for severe illness, including older adults, young children, people with weakened immune systems, people with disabilities, and pregnant people.

To read the complete report, click [here](#). Also, the CDC has created an information FAQ page for the new respiratory guidance, available [here](#).