

Free COVID Tests Available from School Health Clinics

Where can I get a free COVID test kit?

Any staff member or parent/guardian, of a student, may request a free COVID test kit from the school health office.

If a student visits the school health clinic with COVID symptoms, the school nurse will call a parent/guardian to pick up the student, and provide a test kit for at-home use if the parent/guardian wants a test.

The school health clinics will provide saliva-based PCR test kits. The individual being tested must not eat, drink (other than water), or brush their teeth for 30 minutes prior to the test. The individual taking the test will spit into a tube to provide a sample.

Why are you using a PCR test instead of a rapid antigen or antibody test?

Medical officials consider a PCR test the 'gold standard' in detecting COVID-19 infection.

Antibody tests measure antibody levels in the blood to determine if someone has been exposed to the virus. Unfortunately, these tests are not particularly specific in what they measure, and sometimes pick up antibodies developed to other coronaviruses or other respiratory pathogens. These tests cannot determine definitively whether someone was recently infected.

Antigen tests are not as specific and often require confirmatory testing to rule out a false positive or false negative. Antigen tests are best used in an outbreak setting or when individuals are being tested frequently, such as every day or every other day.

How do I obtain test results? Who else has access to them?

Staff may return their test kit sample to the school health clinic. Families may either mail their test kit sample directly to the lab by following the instructions in the test kit or they may return the test kit sample to the school health clinic.

The district's interschool mail route will deliver all test kit samples to the Educational Support Center. The ESC receptionist/administrative assistant will contact LMH Health to pick up the samples for delivery to the lab.

The lab will text results to the number provided on the consent form included in the test kit. The turnaround time for results is approximately 24-48 hours, depending on when tests are delivered to the lab.

If a test is positive, the lab reports it to Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health (LDCPH) for contact tracing purposes as required by law. Additionally, the school district receives a report of all results.

What does the lab do with my sample after it has been tested?

The lab uses a pooling strategy for tests, meaning it combines several tests together and identifies whether the pooled sample was positive or negative. If negative, all samples included in the lot will be considered negative. If the pooled sample gets a positive result, the test will be re-run on all the samples within that lot to identify the positive sample. Saliva samples will be held back for the purposes of re-testing in this manner. The samples will ONLY be used to identify the presence of the virus that causes COVID-19, and will not be analyzed for other purposes such as genome sequencing.

What if my student tests positive?

If your student tests positive, they will be required to isolate for 10 days following the positive test if they are not sick. If they are sick, even with mild symptoms, they are required to isolate 10 days following the start date of the symptoms. They will be able to return to school and regular activities at the end of the isolation period.

What happens if an individual in my/my student's classroom or work area tests positive?

Our school nurses work with LDCPH staff to conduct contact tracing. They identify close contacts or anyone who has been within 6 feet for longer than 10 minutes of an infectious individual or anyone at risk of exposure to the respiratory particles of the infectious individual, such as by being coughed or sneezed on or through sharing of utensils.

Close contacts or individuals at risk of exposure must quarantine for 10 days following their last exposure to the infectious individual in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the school community. Only those identified as close contacts must quarantine. Secondary contacts, such as members of the close contact's household, do not need to quarantine.

What does quarantine mean?

Quarantine means staying at home, monitoring health, and when around others, wearing a mask and staying at least 3 ft. apart. Follow healthy hygiene practices and all public health measures.

An individual may not “test out” of quarantine with a negative test. A negative test is not required to resume regular activities after the end of the quarantine period.

Are there exceptions to quarantine?

There are two exceptions to quarantine:

1) Fully vaccinated individuals* are not required to quarantine if they continue to show no symptoms.

*Individuals are fully vaccinated 2 weeks after their final dose of vaccine.

2) Individuals providing the school nurse proof* of testing positive for COVID-19 within the last 6 months are not required to quarantine if they continue to show no symptoms. The 6-month period starts from the documented date symptoms resolved, the date isolation measures were discontinued, or the date of the positive laboratory test.

* Evidence must be a positive PCR or antigen test or a note from the local health department.

Are quarantine notices enforced?

Lawrence Public Schools works closely with LDCPH in identifying close contacts. As state-mandated infectious disease reporters, school health office staff must comply with regulations in notifying LDCPH of potential exposure to all reportable diseases.

If a close contact chooses not to quarantine as required, LDCPH will serve, with assistance from local law enforcement as necessary, a mandatory written order provided by the Douglas County Health Officer. State statute identifies penalties for not complying with these orders.

How will my child keep up with their schoolwork during quarantine?

Teachers will provide homework assignments for students during the quarantine period. Teachers are available by email or phone to answer questions about homework.

Due to the Kansas Legislature's passage of HB 2134 limiting remote learning, the district is not offering remote learning this year.

Where do I direct questions about quarantine?

Please direct any questions about quarantine to the school nurse, your primary health care provider, or LDCPH.