



RESPIRATORY VIRUS GUIDANCE and RECOMMENDATIONS 2024-2025

As a District, it is important that our schools provide a safe, supportive learning environment for students. This guidance can help schools support a safe learning environment, while lowering the risk/spread of common respiratory viral illnesses including flu, COVID-19 and RSV. This guidance also provides flexibility so schools can adapt to changing local community spread levels. Layering these prevention strategies described in this guidance provides the best results to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

Guidance and Recommendations:

Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) will work with Metro Public Health Department (MPHD), utilizing CDC recommendations, to support safety precautions and mitigation strategies in schools.

- **Visitors**
 - MNPS returned to its normal visitor policy. All visitors should follow all security protocols when signing in, to include using raptor.
 - Schools should continue to use common sense measures to continue to mitigate the spread of infectious diseases.

- **Thermal Imaging Scanners**
 - The mobile thermal scanners provide screening and are a mitigation strategy in place to help create a safer environment. When used correctly, the thermal imaging system can measure an individual's surface skin temperature without physical contact with that person. Please remember, thermal imaging temperature-based screening is not effective at determining if an individual has a respiratory virus such as flu or COVID-19. When a high body temperature is identified by the scanner an additional evaluation by the school nurse should follow.
 - Placement of Thermal Scanners: The optimal placement for these scanners is in the school front entry or lobby. However, it can be used in different areas of the building or wherever you need it the most (example: in or near the nurse's office space). The system is portable and can be easily moved or repositioned.
 - How to Use the Scanner: When using the scanner, there will need to be a staff person trained on how to operate the scanner. Staff should read through the [EV Mobile Thermal Scanning User Manual](#) and view the video prior to use.
 - When to Use the Scanner: The scanner should be placed near front entry doors and used daily. The scanner should also be used in circumstances where the school is in a higher risk situation, such as being identified as a virus "hotspot" (when the number of cases in your school is significantly greater than other schools.)
 - Schools should remember, the scanners are not a diagnostic tool and should not be used this way. This machine measures surface temperature and not core temperature.

Core Prevention Strategies for Schools and Community:

- **Stay Up To Date on Vaccinations**
 - Vaccines reduce the risk of infection by working with the body's natural defenses to help safely develop immunity to disease. Not only does it provide individual- level protection, but high vaccination coverage reduces the burden of some respiratory viruses on people, schools, and communities.
 - On site school located vaccination clinics provided by the district school nurses and Metro Public Health Department offer convenient, easy access to vaccines which prevent respiratory viruses. In addition, the district, through the Employee Health Clinic offers flu, COVID and RSV vaccines. Information about [Immunizations for Respiratory Virus Prevention](#) can be shared with staff and students. Stay updated on school vaccination clinics through Principal Connection.

- **Stay Home When Sick**
 - People with symptoms of any illness, including respiratory viruses, should stay home. Staying home when sick can lower the risk of spreading infectious diseases. For more information on staying home when sick, review [Letter to Parent-When to Stay Home \(Infographic\) June21 2023.pdf](#), [Letter to Parent-Sent Home From School March 2024.pdf](#) and [CDC recommendations](#). Translations can be found in this [folder here](#).

- **Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**
 - Washing hands can prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Please continue reinforce proper [handwashing](#) to lower the risk of spreading viruses.
 - Reinforce these behaviors, especially during key times in the school day (i.e. before and after eating and after physical activity). Provide hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol to classrooms.
 - Teach and reinforce covering [coughs and sneezes](#) to help keep students from getting and spreading infectious diseases, including COVID-19.
 - The MNPS Office of Coordinated School Health and Student Health has resources available to help with health education lessons.

- **Cleaning and Disinfection**
 - Continue to clean surfaces daily to reduce the risk of germs spreading by touching surfaces.

Additional Prevention Strategies for Schools and Community

- **Masking**
 - Wearing a [mask](#) can help lower the risk of respiratory virus transmission. When worn by a person with an infection, masks reduce the spread of the virus to others. Masks can also protect wearers from breathing in infectious particles from people around them. [Wearing a mask strategy](#) information.

- **Physical Distancing**
 - Putting physical distance between yourself and others can help lower the risk of spreading a respiratory virus. There is no single number that defines a “safe” distance, since spread of viruses can depend on many factors. [Physical distancing strategy information.](#)

- **Testing**
 - Testing for respiratory viruses can help you decide what to do next, for example, getting treatment to reduce your risk of severe illness and taking steps to lower your chances of spreading a virus to others. There are various types of tests for respiratory virus infections. Antigen tests (“self-tests” or “rapid tests”) usually return results quickly (around 15 minutes). PCR tests are normally conducted by a healthcare provider. Although antigen tests are usually faster, they are not as good at detecting viruses as PCR tests. This means that you might get a negative result with an antigen test, but actually be infected with the virus.
 - Students and staff are encouraged to test at home or in the community if they have symptoms or have had close contact with someone with COVID-19. Remember anyone who feels ill should stay home. [Testing strategy information.](#)