

# COVID-19 Guidance for Families with Children in Child Care

This guidance is based on the [ChildCareStrongNC Public Health Toolkit](#) from the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) include multiple prevention strategies. Policies may be revised based on updated recommendations from health professionals.

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## Before Going to Child Care:

### Stay up to date

Get updates about the [current COVID-19 situation in North Carolina](#) from NC DHHS.

### Get vaccinated

COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective at protecting you from getting sick. Getting vaccinated also may prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death. You are protecting your child(ren) by being fully vaccinated.

### Practice and reinforce good health habits with your family.

Remember the “3 W’s”

- **W**ear a face covering over your nose and mouth.
- **W**ait 6 feet apart. Avoid close contact with others.
- **W**ash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.

### Prepare and plan.

Make a plan in case you need to stay home with your child or there are closures at child care. Talk to your employer about sick leave or working remotely in case you need to stay home with your child.

### Identify Symptoms of COVID-19

Staying home when sick is necessary to keep COVID-19 infections out of child care programs and prevent spreading the virus to other children and staff.

### Keep children at home if:

- they have symptoms of illness. Contact a healthcare provider to discuss care for your child. Consider having your child tested for COVID-19 to determine whether others may have been exposed.
- they have been diagnosed with COVID-19 by testing or by a health care provider.

After a person is exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19, symptoms may appear **2-14 days later**. Symptoms of COVID-19 can be very mild or severe and include:

- |   |                            |  |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| • Fever*                                      | • Fatigue                  | • Nausea or vomiting   |
| • Chills                                      | • Muscle or body aches     | • Diarrhea   |
| • New cough                                   | • Headache                 | This list does not include all possible symptoms and it may change as new information is discovered. |
| • New loss of taste or smell                  | • Sore throat              |  |
| • Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing | • Congestion or runny nose |  |

\*Fever is a temperature of 100.4 or higher **or** symptoms like flushed cheeks, fatigue, extreme fussiness, chills, shivering, sweating, achiness, headache, or not eating or drinking.

Share **any symptoms** or test results with the facility.

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## Identify exposure to COVID-19

**Keep your child home** if they have been in **close contact** with someone:

- who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or
- who has symptoms of COVID-19, unless the person with symptoms tests negative or if a health care provider determines the symptoms are not COVID-19.

**Close contact** means that a person has been within six feet of someone for a total of 15 minutes over 24 hours. The 15 minutes is a total amount of time throughout the day. For example, five minutes at a time three times during the day.

A person with COVID-19:

- may be contagious up to 48 hours BEFORE their symptoms start, or they test positive AND
- are contagious for at least 10 days AFTER their symptoms started or they tested positive.

If a child has been in close contact with someone in the period of time that the person with COVID-19 is contagious, they should not come to child care. They should also not come to child care if any health department or a health care provider been in contact with you and advised you to quarantine your child.

## When at Child Care:

**Practice social distancing:** Maintain 6 feet of distance between adults who are not fully vaccinated, to the greatest extent possible.

- You may be allowed to walk your child to their classroom or staff members may greet your child outside.
- **Breastfeeding mothers** may enter the facility to feed a child in the designated breastfeeding space.

**Wear a face covering:** When people wear a mask correctly and consistently, they protect others as well as themselves. Consistent and correct mask use is especially important indoors and when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

Everyone above the age of two, regardless of vaccination status, should wear a face covering when:

- indoors when around anyone who does not live in your household
- outdoors when:
  - six (6) feet of physical distancing from non-household members cannot be maintained
  - the outdoor space is crowded.

Exceptions to the face-covering recommendation include any person who has trouble breathing, is unconscious or incapacitated, or is otherwise unable to put on or remove the face covering without assistance.

## Daily Health Checks

Talk to an early educator during drop off about your child's health since they were last in care, including:

- any signs or symptoms of illness or injury, including symptoms of COVID-19
- any accidents, unusual events, or injuries that have occurred and
- any mood or behavior changes.

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## Exclusion from Child Care

While symptoms of COVID-19 are one reason children may be excluded from care, some other illnesses may require exclusion.

The NC Child Care Rules also require exclusion if a child:

- is unable to participate comfortably in activities, as determined by staff members of the program or
- has symptoms that result in a need for care that is greater than the staff can safely provide without compromising the health and safety of other children.

If your child is excluded because **of COVID-19**:

- They should go home. It is important they stay home and away from other people. Staying away from others helps stop the spread of COVID-19.
- If your child has COVID-19 symptoms,
  - contact your child's health care provider.
  - have your child tested right away.
- If your child was exposed to someone with COVID-19 but does not have symptoms:
  - Wait at least 5 days from the last known exposure to get tested, for an accurate result. (A negative test after exposure may not allow the child to return to child care earlier.)

### **Nebulizers**

Giving nebulizer treatments in child care is not recommended during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ask your doctor about using inhalers with spacers whenever possible.

## Returning to Child Care

The child care program will let you know when your child can safely return to child care, based on recommendations from the [ChildCareStrongNC Public Health Toolkit](#), the local health department, and facility policy.