

Guidance for Mask Choice

- The New York State requirement for universal masking in schools has been lifted.
- Local health departments (LHD) may still tailor guidance to their jurisdiction. A LHD may implement masking requirements that are more restrictive than the state, and LHDs and Green Chimneys will collaborate on masking and testing decisions. *Green Chimneys is located in Putnam County and follows Putnam County Department of Health Guidance; including reinstating of masks if necessary.*
- **In all settings, isolation protocol is to be followed from Day 0 (symptom onset or positive test if asymptomatic). Masking continues to be required during and upon return from isolation during Days 6 through 10 after COVID-19 infection.** Students and essential staff members may return to work on Day 6. If you are able to do your job remotely, you may return on Day 11.
- Masking, regardless of vaccination status, is **STRONGLY RECOMMENDED** for 10 days after a known exposure.
- Testing on Day 5 after exposure is **STRONGLY RECOMMENDED** to detect infection among individuals identified as exposed or potentially exposed; identification of exposed individuals may be simplified by using group (e.g., classroom, school bus) rather than individual assessments.
- Green Chimneys will supply testing for staff, residents, and students (with consent) for as long as supplies remain.

Students and staff are expected to stay at home when ill or symptomatic.

Exclude from school or work until at least 24 hours after fever breaks without fever-reducing medicine (such as Tylenol, or ibuprofen), and a SARS-CoV-2 test is negative. In this situation, this can be accomplished with either a PCR or antigen test.

Students, staff and teachers must wear masks on return to work or school during Days 6-10 of their isolation period and are encouraged to do so Days 0-10 of a known exposure.

Students, staff and teachers should wear masks when:

- They feel more comfortable wearing a mask for personal reasons.
- They were in the same room as someone diagnosed with COVID-19 for 15 minutes or longer and were thus exposed or potentially exposed.
- They are known to have been exposed to COVID-19 in any setting within the previous 10 days.
- They are moderately-to-severely immunocompromised and have discussed the need to mask with their healthcare provider(s).
- They have returned from isolation on Day 6.

Masks should be well-fitted and appropriately worn (to cover nose and mouth) and should conform to [CDC guidelines for masks and respirators](#).

Masking is no longer required on school buses or vans. Individuals who are required to wear masks in school should wear masks on school transport.

Masked and unmasked people will be working and learning alongside each other on campus. We are a “mask positive” environment; those who wear masks, whether by choice, expectation, or requirement, are not stigmatized, bullied, or made to feel uncomfortable, and likewise, those for whom masks have not been required or recommended are not stigmatized, bullied, or made to feel uncomfortable.

Whenever persons are expected or required to wear masks, masks may be removed when eating, drinking, singing, going outside, or playing a wind instrument. When masks are removed for these purposes, physical distancing of 6 feet or more should be maintained to the extent possible.

Testing in a school setting with reduced mask usage

In the absence of a statewide masking requirement, COVID-19 testing remains a recommended public health strategy for surveillance and to identify infected individuals quickly so that they can isolate and avoid spreading COVID-19 further.

Whenever someone – a student, staff or teacher – is determined to have been exposed or potentially exposed, the individual should consider being tested for COVID-19 as follows:

- Immediately upon learning of the exposure or potential exposure,
- At least 5 days after the last date of exposure or potential exposure, regardless of vaccination status,
- If the individual is not fully vaccinated and attending or working at school after an exposure or potential exposure, frequent testing (e.g., daily, every other day, at least twice within 5 days) from the date of the exposure or potential exposure (Day 0) through at least Day 5 should be strongly considered and encouraged,
- If a test is positive exclude from school or work and/or exclude from school or work and test as soon as possible if symptoms develop,
- Exception: Individuals with lab-confirmed COVID-19 within the past 3 months do not need to get tested unless they develop symptoms.

Health protocols

Symptomatic individuals, regardless of vaccination status or recent infection, should stay home until tested and if positive or not tested, should isolate for 5 days, or until other criteria are met for school attendance (e.g., resolution of fever), whichever is longer. The [NYSDOH flow chart](#) addresses school attendance and requirements for children who have symptoms consistent with vaccine side effects shortly after receipt of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Exposed individuals, regardless of vaccination status, may remain in school or at work by appropriately wearing a well-fitting mask and undergoing recommended testing. Students may continue to participate in extracurricular activities. These individuals also may continue to ride the bus.

Green Chimneys will use other mitigation measures including improved ventilation, access to and encouragement of vaccination, surveillance testing, and access to free over the counter at-home test kits, as well as:

- Vigorous cleaning protocols
- Handwashing requirements
- Meetings larger than five persons (or in space that cannot allow for distancing) will continue to be held virtually and or outside when appropriate
- Continued use of ezSCRN, required for staff members to use daily at this time
- Daily screenings for any students who have been exposed for 10 days post-exposure by the nurse before entering the classroom
- Continued screening for visitors to Green Chimneys. Only essential visitors or resident family visitors are permitted; the campus remains closed to public visitors at this time

This guidance is in effect for all of Green Chimneys staff and students on all sites with the exception of Green Chimneys' Connecticut adult services.