



Respiratory Virus Spread Guidance

As [respiratory virus](#) season approaches, stay vigilant about symptoms, preventative measures, and when to seek medical treatment. Viruses like influenza, COVID-19, and RSV cause significant hospitalizations and deaths each fall and winter, especially among [high-risk](#) individuals.

[Immunization](#) is crucial. Vaccines are available and generally recommended for all ages for [influenza and COVID-19](#), and for certain higher risk groups for [RSV](#) to prevent illness and severe disease.

COVID-19, Influenza and RSV can have similar symptoms. Seek medical care as needed for testing and treatment. Symptoms may include but are not limited to chest discomfort, chills, cough, decrease in appetite, diarrhea, fatigue (tiredness), fever or feeling feverish, headache, muscle or body aches, new loss of taste or smell, runny or stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat, vomiting, weakness, wheezing.

The following information aligns with recommendations from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health ([DPH](#)) and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)).

When you are sick, taking simple steps such as isolating and covering your cough can help keep others from getting sick, especially those who could get seriously ill.

- Those who test positive for a respiratory virus like COVID-19, Influenza or RSV or have two or more symptoms such as cough, sore throat, fever or fatigue, should isolate, even if they have not taken a test.
 - An isolating person may return to normal activities after 3 days have passed since symptom onset (or positive test if asymptomatic) and **if** all three conditions below are true (the day of onset of symptoms is day #0) for at least 24 hours:
 - Your symptoms are getting better overall, **and**
 - You have not had a fever (and are not using fever-reducing medication) **and**
 - You feel well enough to return to work.
- When returning to work, take extra precautions such as washing your hands often (or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer) and wearing a well fitted N-95 or surgical mask until day 8 after symptoms started (day 8 is the first day without a mask).
 - If you continue to have any symptoms (cough, sneeze, runny nose) after 7 days, use a mask until all symptoms resolve.
- If your fever returns or you start feeling worse after returning to work, Isolate again. You can go back to work once your symptoms are improving, you've been fever-free for at least 24 hours, and haven't used fever-reducing medicine. After that, take extra precautions for the next 4 days including:
 - Avoiding crowded indoor spaces
 - Wearing a mask indoors around other people
 - Washing your hands often
 - Covering your coughs and sneezes



- Caregivers who return to work before 7 full days have passed since symptom onset or their first positive test, must wear a face mask through the end of day 7. Masks may be removed starting on day 8. If you continue to have symptoms after 7 days, use a mask until all symptoms resolve.

Example scenarios

For illustrative purposes, not to scale

Day 0 represents symptom onset (shown on graphics)

Example 1: Person with fever and symptoms.



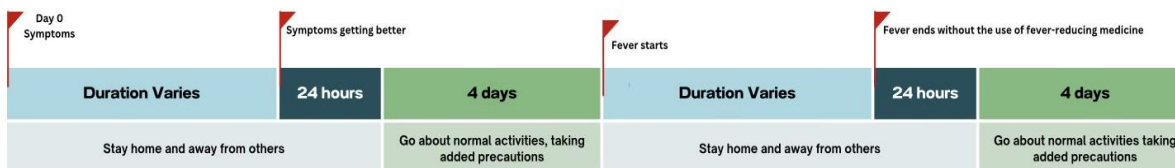
Example 2: Person with fever but no other symptoms.



Example 3: Person with fever and other symptoms, fever ends but other symptoms take longer to improve.



Example 4: Person gets better and then gets a fever.





People supported by DDS:

If a person supported by DDS shows symptoms consistent with a respiratory illness such as COVID-19, influenza, or RSV, they should be evaluated promptly by a health care professional.

- If fever or other symptoms such as sore throat, cough or runny nose are present, even if they have not tested positive for COVID or flu, they should be asked to remain home for at least 24 hours after the fever resolves without the use of fever-reducing medication **and** symptoms are getting better overall **and** they feel well enough to participate. When they return, they should take these extra precautions to the extent possible for 5 more days:
 - Avoid crowded indoor spaces. If possible, wear a mask anytime you are indoors around other people.
 - If the individual cannot mask, they should stay home at least 5 days before returning to program.
 - Wash hands often with soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- If they have tested positive for infection with a respiratory virus but have no symptoms, for at least the first 5 days, they should:
 - Avoid crowded indoor spaces. Wear a mask anytime you are indoors around other people.
 - If the individual cannot mask, they should stay home at least 5 days before returning to program.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Individuals who develop additional symptoms after returning OR who have been asymptomatic after testing positive and later develop symptoms, should be asked to go home and remain there until at least 24 hours after the fever resolves without the use of fever-reducing medication and symptoms are getting better overall and they feel well enough to participate.

www.vaccinefinder.org

<https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/about/index.html>

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/viral-respiratory-illness-reporting>