

September 23, 2020

Dear ACS Families,

We opened for in-person learning on September 2nd and now that we have hit the three-week mark, we're communicating what we've learned and what you can expect in the near future. We have been fortunate thus far that no students, staff, or parents have tested positive for COVID-19. However, some of our students have been tested in the past 2-3 weeks. This is because parents are being diligent, and our protocols are working.

Some of you have asked if it is really necessary to test a child every time he/she stays home from school or if the child is sent home during the school day with symptoms. Given our advice from the Health Department and our own desire to err on the side of caution, we're treating every COVID symptom as if it could in fact be the virus. For this reason, we're asking all families to have their children with symptoms tested before returning to school. Testing is easy to find, free at some clinics, and we're finding that despite the warning that they can take 2-3 days for results, most are coming back within 24 hours.

Since almost all symptoms are considered COVID-like, it will save us time in phone calls and make your child's return faster if you assume that you'll have to test for COVID. When possible, call the school and let us know that your child has already been tested and the results were negative. After testing negative, he/she can return to school 24 hours after symptoms have subsided. Siblings can remain at school while the test is pending unless they are also showing symptoms or until the test comes back positive at which time all siblings will be quarantined for 14 days from the last day of contact.

Testing is easy and has become less invasive since the testing began. It is now a simple swab of the upper nostril. Parents can visit testdirectly.com and choose the nearest location for a COVID-19 test and pre-arrange a drop-in test. It's free and usually a quick drive-through. Parents can also contact their healthcare provider and schedule a drive-through appointment which is sometimes faster with results.

Families also have a choice not to test. However, if you don't want testing, the child will need to stay home for 10 days from the onset of symptoms and return to school on the eleventh day and after symptoms have improved.

Finally, I'd like to leave you with the verbiage from the Department of Health's Guidance for K-12 schools found here

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/FallGuidanceK-12.pdf>

K-12 Schools – Fall 2020-2021 Guidance

- o Students, teachers, and staff follow all steps to protect themselves and others at all times including proper use of face coverings masks, physical distancing, hand hygiene
- o Regularly scheduled cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched areas implemented with fidelity
- Medium Risk: Hybrid Learning Model: Most students participate in in-person learning, some students
www.doh.wa.gov

-Do you have any of the following symptoms within the last day that are not caused by another condition? (If it is the first day after a break or for a new student, please ask about the past 3 days.)

- Fever (100.4°F) or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Unusual fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Recent loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

-For ill persons without known exposure to a confirmed COVID-19 case...

- If Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) testing for COVID-19 is not performed, stay home for at least 10 days after symptom onset, and at least 24 hours after fever has resolved and symptoms have improved. People with severe disease or who are immunocompromised may need to isolate at home for longer.
- If PCR testing for COVID-19 is negative, stay home until 24 hours after the fever resolves and symptoms improve.

We know this is inconvenient and many of you wonder why the testing is so crucial. Remember that we are under a microscope for Whatcom County and being only one of a few schools open for in-person learning, the health department is waiting to see how we do. I remain hopeful...

Sincerely,

Dan