

Back to school

Updated: September 2021



On 1 September, schools and colleges safely reopened after the summer break. However, we know that some people may have concerns about what this means now that many COVID-19 restrictions, including class and year group ‘bubbles’ for under 18s, have been lifted.

Schools have been carefully following local and national public health advice to prepare for the return of all children and to ensure each school is safe. This includes regular rapid testing of school staff and secondary and special school pupils to identify those who may have COVID-19 but no symptoms.

Children don't spread coronavirus more than adults. For most people – and especially children – if they do catch the virus, the symptoms will be mild.

Please read on for our latest updated advice and guidance to help you, your family and others to stay safe.

What are the main symptoms of COVID-19?

- **A high temperature.** You feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you don't need to measure your temperature)
- **A new, continuous cough.** Coughing a lot for more than an hour, or three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- **A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.** You've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

If you have any of these symptoms, you need to self-isolate straight away and order a PCR test. If your child has symptoms, keep them at home and order a PCR test for them.

What to do if you test positive for COVID-19

If a child or school / nursery staff member tests positive on a lateral flow device (LFD) test, they should self-isolate and inform their school or nursery. They should immediately order a confirmatory PCR test to check the positive result:

- **If the PCR test is taken within two days and the result is negative,** they can stop self-isolating (unless instructed to self-isolate for other reasons)
- **If the PCR test is positive (or is taken more than two days after the LFD),** they must self-isolate until 10 days after the date of the LFD test.

Other members of their household will also be strongly advised to take a PCR test. Close contacts of the confirmed case (including siblings) who are **under 18** or **fully-vaccinated** will not need to self-isolate **unless they have symptoms or have tested positive.**

If anyone in your household tests positive from a PCR test alone, they must self-isolate straight away. The self-isolation period includes the day your symptoms started (or the day you had the test, if you do not have symptoms) and the next 10 full days.

The other main things parents / carers need to know

- NHS Test and Trace are responsible for contact tracing and schools in Camden and Islington will no longer have to identify close contacts
- Following the **two on-site LFD tests on return in the autumn term**, secondary and college students should continue to test twice-weekly at home until the end of September, when this will be reviewed
- School staff should also undertake twice-weekly home tests until the end of September, when this will be reviewed
- Protective measures will remain in place for the autumn term in all schools, colleges and nurseries, including **practising good hygiene, ventilation, and regular testing until the end of September**
- Face coverings are no longer required for pupils, staff and visitors, either in classrooms or in communal areas. However, the Government "expects and recommends" that people wear face coverings unless they are exempt, in crowded indoor settings, such as public transport (Transport for London requires face coverings to be worn on their tubes and buses), dedicated transport to school or college or when mixing with people you don't normally meet
- From 16 August, the legal requirement to self-isolate for contacts of a positive case ended for everyone aged under 18, and for adults who have been fully vaccinated. Instead, children – or a parent or guardian – will be informed they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a PCR test. Anyone with symptoms or a positive LFD or PCR test result must isolate
- All school trips, drama, music and sporting activity can resume in line with the relaxation of restrictions.

Stay safe

We all need to work together to make sure we keep our schools safe, so please remember to:

- Keep washing your hands
- Please consider wearing face coverings in congested areas where social distancing is not possible, for example at the school entrance during dropping off and picking up times (your school will let you know what plans are in place)
- Stay at home if you or your child (or someone you live with) have symptoms and get tested
 - Tests can be booked online at: nhs.uk/coronavirus or by calling **119**
 - You can also find information and advice about testing, as well as test and trace at nhs.uk/coronavirus

We know that about one in three people with COVID-19 don't have any symptoms, but can still pass the virus on.

Both Camden and Islington councils are offering free rapid COVID tests for people aged 12 and over. All tests are free and you can expect results within 30 minutes. You can book a test in person or home test kits are also available for pickup.

- In Camden, book online: camden.gov.uk/rapidtest or call **020 7974 4444 (option 9)**
- You can also order test kits online for delivery: gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests
- In Islington, visit islington.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/coronavirus-covid-19/how-to-book-a-test

Anyone with a positive result should start to self-isolate straight away along with everyone in their household if not exempt.

Those contacts who are exempt from self-isolation from 16 August will still be advised to take a PCR test, but will not be required to self-isolate while they wait for the result.

They will also be advised to consider the following precautions until 10 days after their most recent contact with the positive case:

- Limiting close contact with people outside their household, especially in enclosed spaces
- Wearing a face covering in enclosed spaces and where they are unable to maintain social distancing
- Limiting contact with anyone who is clinically extremely vulnerable
- Taking part in regular lateral flow testing.

Keep healthy

Children should walk, cycle or scoot to school if they can, rather than taking public transport. Children aged 11 and over who take public transport should still wear a face covering.

Vaccinations protect you and your family from many other infectious diseases. Speak to your GP to make sure all your child's vaccinations are up-to-date.

Getting the COVID-19 vaccine

Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and your family from COVID-19. It is quick, safe and easy to get vaccinated, with lots of places offering drop-in appointments.

You do not need to be registered with a GP or have an NHS number to get the vaccination, and no-one will ask about immigration status. The vaccine is now available for 16 and 17 year olds, as well as children aged 12 and over with specific underlying health conditions or who live with someone with a suppressed immune system.

- In Camden, visit camden.gov.uk/covid-vaccines to find out where you can book or attend a drop-in vaccination session
- Visit nhs.uk/coronavirusvaccine
- In Islington, visit islington.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-vaccinations
- Or visit the NHS North Central London CCG website: northcentrallondonccg.nhs.uk/my-health/covid-19/covid-19-vaccinations-in-north-central-london

Help and support is available

You can contact your school with any questions. You can also organise a private meeting with your School Nurse who can speak to you about any concerns you may have about coronavirus. For example, if you are worried about older relatives who live with you.

For School Nurses, please email camdenschoolnurses@nhs.net or call **020 3317 2304**.

If you're worried about self-isolating for whatever reason, get in touch with Camden Council who can help you – **020 7974 4444 (option 9)** or visit camden.gov.uk/support-for-individuals

In Islington, you can visit islington.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/coronavirus-covid-19/need-help/financial-support

COVID SYMPTOMS? GET TESTED NOW.

nhs.uk/coronavirus **OR CALL 119**

Become a COVID-19 Health Champion

Help to share the latest advice and guidance about COVID-19 with your family, friends and other community members in Camden or Islington.

To sign-up, [complete this form](#)

If you've got questions, email us at CHC@islington.gov.uk



Working in partnership