



# Additional Strategies

for Schools to Reduce Spread During Times of Elevated Illness

## KEY POINTS

- Schools may need to use Additional Strategies to reduce spread of infectious diseases during times of elevated illness.
- Each strategy's effectiveness and feasibility depends on the type of illness, age of the students, and other local factors.
- Controlling spread helps schools stay open and provide safe, continuous, in-person learning to the greatest extent feasible for all students.

## How to recognize times of elevated illness:

Typically, one to several students and staff may be absent from school due to common childhood or seasonal infectious diseases. Review attendance records from previous years to get a sense of the variability in typical levels of illness throughout the school year. Understanding these typical patterns can make it easier to recognize when the number of absences is higher than expected.

When absences for illness rise above the typical or expected level for several days or more, this may indicate the school or district is experiencing a **time of elevated illness**. During a time of elevated illness, schools can work closely with their local health department to identify the infectious disease and to decide which strategies will effectively limit the spread of illness.

Learn more about the five **Additional Strategies** that schools can use on the following page.

### DEFINITION

## Time of Elevated Illness

A period of days to weeks when the number of absences due to illness is higher than expected based on historical patterns.

## Use these **Additional Strategies** to reduce spread:



**Masking and respiratory protection:** Correctly and consistently wearing a mask can help lower the risk of respiratory virus transmission. Where consistent with local laws, schools can use indoor mask wearing as an additional strategy when respiratory disease spread is high.

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**Increasing distance and cohorting:** Physical distancing reduces the spread of illness by increasing the space between people. When space is limited, schools can use cohorts to form separate groups of students, reducing the number of people each student interacts with during the school day.

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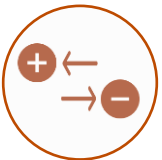
**Illness monitoring:** For certain illnesses, schools can offer parents and caregivers guidance on monitoring students for illness, determining when a child should stay home, and deciding when to return to school once the student feels better. Health departments can assist with creating this guidance.

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**Testing:** Screening tests identify people with an infection who do not have symptoms yet, so they don't continue to come to school and spread the illness to others. When disease-specific tests are available, schools can test all or a portion of their students regularly to monitor for illness.

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**Managing exposure:** Schools can identify spaces with good ventilation for separating sick students from well students while waiting for them to leave school. Ideally, staff will have personal protective equipment available to wear while monitoring sick students who are waiting for parents or caregivers.

## You can reduce the spread of illnesses and keep schools open!

Responding proactively to times of elevated illness with these additional infection prevention strategies can limit the number of students and staff who get sick and maintain school operations.

Learn more at: <https://www.cdc.gov/orr/school-preparedness/infection-prevention/strategies.html>