



# Pettis County

## H E A L T H C E N T E R

### Health Update Preparing for Back to School

August, 2021

Children in Pettis County will soon be returning to school. Every new school year brings new challenges and adventures, but for some students, who have been learning at home, this change can bring new worries. To help parents and families prepare for return to school and understand what requirements are still in place related for dealing with the ongoing pandemic, the following information is provided.

1. Talk to your student about concerns they have for returning to school. Children and teenagers understand the world differently based on what they hear and see. There has been a lot of discussion about being safe in school in all types of media. Understanding what your children have heard and how they are dealing with that information will help you know how to help them. If you do not feel comfortable addressing your child's concerns, please reach out to school counselors, your child's health care provider or mental health providers.
2. Requirements for routine school immunizations are still in place. For students who did not attend class in person last year, missing routine updates may have happened. The Pettis County Health Center is available to provide routine vaccinations along with family health care providers. If you have questions, about the routine school vaccination requirements, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services website has a complete list of required vaccines by grade level. The vaccine for COVID is not on the list of required vaccines.  
<https://health.mo.gov/living/wellness/immunizations/schoolrequirements.php>
3. For parents concerned about vaccines, the Pettis County Health Center offers appointments for religious exemptions every Wednesday. We use the time to explain how vaccines work, allow time for questions and make sure parents understand that if there is an outbreak of a disease in school from the list of required vaccines, a student who is not fully vaccinated against that disease will be excluded from school. For parents who do not wish to get a religious exemption card from the Pettis County Health Center, they may contact the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services Bureau of Immunization at 573-751-6124 for the required document. Schools are required to only accept an original Imm.P 11A. Copies or hand written notes are not able to be accepted by state requirement. Medical exemptions need to be provided by the student's health care provider.
4. The requirements for isolation for individuals who are positive for the COVID virus and quarantine for those who have been a close contact remain in place. This is not an optional event but rather required under state laws and regulations. The definition of a close contact that would require quarantine is anyone who has been within 6 feet (3 feet for students) of a positive case for a cumulative 15 minutes within 24 hours (for example 5 minutes of contact 3 times in a school day) when both individuals are not consistently and correctly wearing a face

4. covering. The Health Center staff will work with schools to identify those students who meet the definition of a close contact. Options for release from quarantine are:
  - a: 14 days from the last contact with the positive case when the positive case is a household member.
  - b: For **non-household contacts** the period of quarantine is 10 days from the last contact with the infected person for people with no symptoms.
  - c: The quarantine period may be decreased for **non-household contacts** who have no symptoms, who are tested with a PCR test 5 days after last exposure, provide the results to the Pettis County Health Center, have a negative test, and remain without symptoms may be released from quarantine after 7 days, but must monitor for symptoms and wear a mask for 7 more days. Health Center staff will call individuals listed as contacts to a positive case within schools.
  - d: **Fully vaccinated individuals do not need to quarantine although the CDC recommends testing 3-5 days after exposure.**

Individuals who test positive for the COVID virus remain in isolation for 10 days from the onset of symptoms or test date if there are no symptoms.

5. The goal for everyone is to protect our children and keep them in the classroom. The best strategies are using as many levels of protection as possible. Levels of protection include vaccination for those who are eligible (12 years of age and older), correctly and consistently wearing face coverings, increased ventilation for indoor spaces, good hand washing, maintaining distance (3 feet is acceptable for classrooms) cleaning of common surfaces, having testing available and staying home when ill. Decisions regarding which strategies will be utilized is up to school districts. Masks are required on school buses by federal requirements.
6. Vaccination to protect individuals from serious illness and death is proving to be effective. Vaccines are available from a variety of locations in the community. Everyone age 12 years and older is eligible for vaccination. Vaccines are free. For additional information about vaccines, [www.MOStopsCOVID.com](http://www.MOStopsCOVID.com) provides a variety of resources related to the vaccine.
7. The COVID virus, particularly the Delta variant, continues to spread easily among unvaccinated people. The COVID virus we were dealing with during the last school is not the same as the Delta variant. No one can predict what will happen if new variants emerge. We understand that the changing guidelines are confusing and frustrating. The Health Center will advise the community of the updates created to keep our children and community as safe as possible. At this time, we all need to work together to protect our children.
8. If you have questions, please feel free to contact the Pettis County Health Center at 660-827-1130.