

Department of Elementary & Secondary Education and Department of Public Health

**Frequently Asked Questions, January 6, 2022**

**1. When do the updated DPH/DESE Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios go into effect?**

The updated [DPH/DESE Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios](#) were released on December 30, 2021 and were effective immediately. The protocols can be applied retroactively for people currently in isolation or quarantine. So, if an individual tested positive for COVID-19 prior to the date the updated guidance was released, they should now use the 5-day isolation or quarantine period and return to school once they have met certain conditions as outlined in the protocols.

**2. Can individuals returning from quarantine and isolation remove their masks to eat meals?**

Per the updated protocols, individuals returning from a 5-day isolation and quarantine must mask for an additional 5 days when around others. Like individuals participating in Test & Stay, during meals, masks should only be removed when individuals are actively eating. Additionally, DESE recommends a physical distance of at least 3 feet while eating, as feasible. This means masks must be worn when individuals are waiting for meals or sitting at lunch tables after meals are finished.

**3. What is the definition of fully vaccinated as it relates to the eligibility for the updated isolation and quarantine guidance?**

At this time, and as provided in the updated [DPH/DESE Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios](#), fully vaccinated is still defined as two-weeks following the completion of the Pfizer or Moderna series or two-weeks following a single dose of Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine.