

MEDIA RELEASE

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



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COUNTY OF ERIE
OFFICE OF THE
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Public Health Advisory on COVID-19 for Erie County Schools

Erie, PA — County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper held a press briefing to discuss COVID-19 prevention and public health recommendations for Erie County schools using guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Guests included Melissa Lyon, director of Erie County Department of Health; Brad Whitman, executive director of Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit 5; Reva Chekka, MD and Sviatlana Sirash, MD, pediatricians; and Yarimar Cosme, a parent who has two school-aged children. Watch the press briefing [here](#).

The public is reminded that the Centers for the CDC recommends wearing masks indoors for all, including for those fully vaccinated and those who are immunocompromised, because of Erie County's substantial to high transmission rate of COVID-19, which means it has 50 or more positive cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 people.

Prevention strategies

Vaccination helps the body prevent severe illness and lessens the likelihood of needing hospitalization. Nearly all hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19 have been among unvaccinated persons.

To protect unvaccinated students, teachers, staff and members of their households, the CDC recommends using multiple prevention strategies to reduce the risk of transmission.

The CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students and any visitors, regardless of vaccination status. Wearing masks that covers the mouth and nose helps reduce the spread of infectious respiratory illnesses such as COVID-19. According to the CDC, studies on the effects of wearing masks have shown there is no change in oxygen or carbon dioxide levels when people wear cloth and surgical masks while resting and exercising.

Schools should maintain at least three feet of physical distance between students in classrooms. Screening testing, ventilation, handwashing, covering the mouth when coughing or sneezing, and cleaning and disinfection are other important layers of preventing the spread of COVID-19.

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Students, teachers and staff should stay home when they feel symptoms or have signs of any infectious illness and be referred to their health care provider for testing and appropriate care. COVID-19 symptoms include coughing, difficulty breathing, fever or chills, muscle or body aches, vomiting or diarrhea, or loss of taste or smell.

Community involvement

The community is reminded that public health measures such as contact tracing, isolation and quarantine are necessary to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Individuals who are identified as close contacts of a person with COVID-19 are asked to cooperate with all public health recommendations, including quarantine, so that if they become infected, they will not spread infection to others.

All unvaccinated residents are encouraged to get vaccinated for COVID-19 to protect their health. Vaccines for COVID-19 are available for free for residents of Erie County ages 12 years and older. Finding vaccines in nearby locations can be done by:

- texting your ZIP Code to 438829
- visiting [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov)
- calling 1-800-232-0233

Questions related to COVID-19 may be directed to Erie County Department of Health at 814-451-6700 or ecdinfo@eriecountypa.gov.

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