

# COVID-19 & Schools: What Parents Need to Know

Stephanie Carey, MPH, Health Officer, Montgomery Township

*Derived from a presentation by Bert Mandelbaum, MD FAAP*

*Pediatrician- Princeton Nassau Pediatrics*

*Chair of Pediatrics, Penn Medicine Princeton Health*

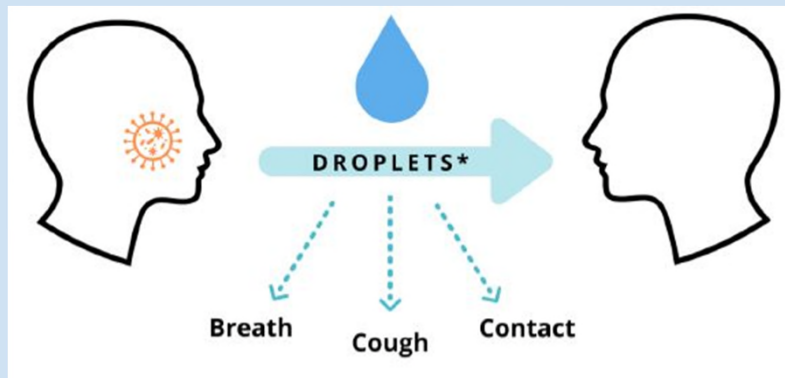
*School Physician- Montgomery BOE*

August 25th, 2020

# How is this Virus Spread?

## \*Primary Way\*

Face-to-face spread  
through droplets



## \*Secondary Ways\*

Contact with droplets  
and then touching eyes,  
nose or mouth

Aerosolization (rarely)

# What is Considered a High-Risk Exposure?

10 minutes within 6 feet without appropriate PPE (mask and eye protection) to someone who tests positive for COVID



# Mitigation Strategies - Basic Premises

Disease in schools will reflect the community prevalence- much safer to open schools when prevalence is low

No single intervention will be perfect, but each additional layer of protection reduces risk

# Mitigation Strategy Step 1- Keep Sick People Out

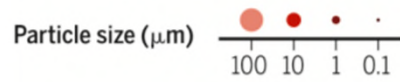
- Sick staff or students must **not** attend in-person school
- Daily screenings should be done, at home by each individual family. Not just temperature, but overall how your child is feeling
- People who are at higher risk because of exposure or travel will be recommended to be quarantined, to further lower the risk of someone having the disease in school

# Mitigation Strategy Step 2- Reduce Exposure In School From People *Without* Symptoms

- Mandatory masking is key
- Maximizing of Physical Distancing- as much as you can (6 feet is the goal)
- Improvement in environmental cleaning, ventilation (Open windows and outdoor time)
- Improvement in hand hygiene—Soap and water, or sanitizer
- Avoiding crowds or situations where exposure is more likely
- Cohorting into smaller, stable groups (limits the number of people potentially exposed)

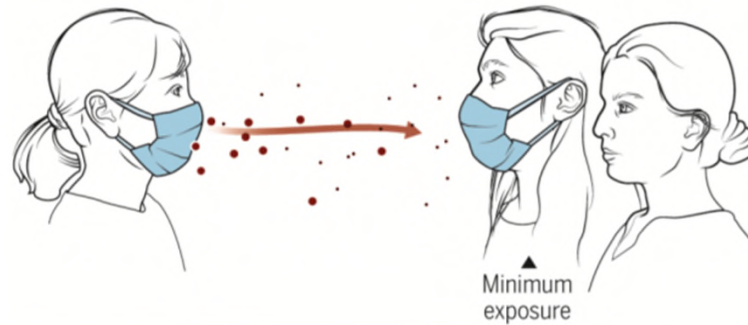
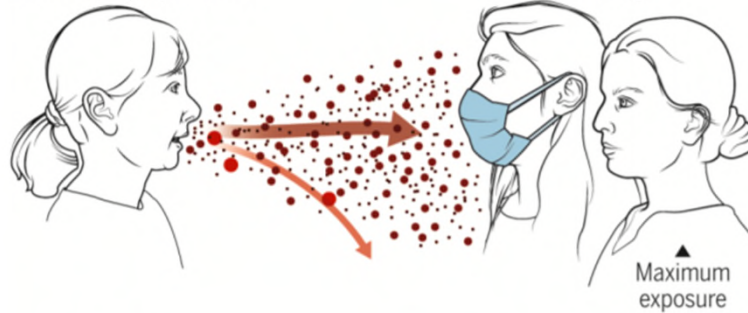
## Masks reduce airborne transmission

Infectious aerosol particles can be released during breathing and speaking by asymptomatic infected individuals. No masking maximizes exposure, whereas universal masking results in the least exposure.



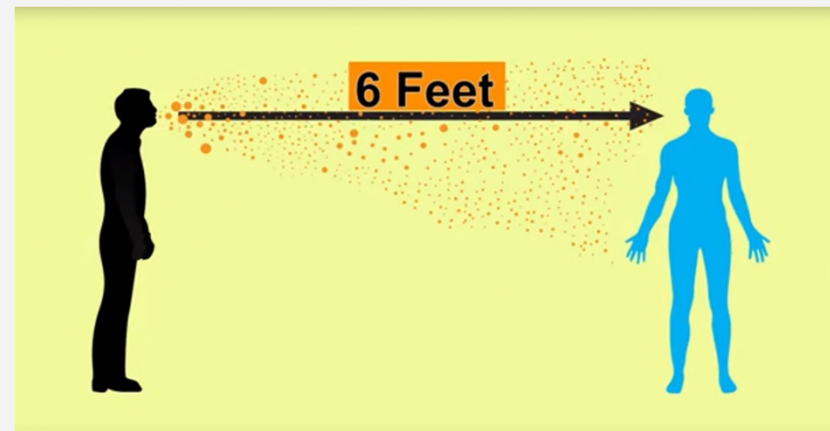
Infected, asymptomatic

Healthy



# Physical Distance

- Most droplets fall within 3 feet
- We have doubled that number to be conservative
- If coughing, sneezing, yelling or significantly increasing the force or expiration, droplets can go further



<https://www.countynewscenter.com/social-distancing-visiting-restrictions-established-mass-gatherings-banned-5-more-positive-covid-19-cases-reported-locally/>



# Mitigation Strategy Step 3- Sending home Sick Children Immediately

- Child appearing ill with fever, respiratory symptoms, gi symptoms will get sent home immediately
- Siblings of that child will likely be sent home as well
- Students cannot return to school for at least 10 days from 1<sup>st</sup> day of symptoms and 24 hours of improvement of symptoms UNLESS
  - They have a **negative Covid test AND have improved for 24 hours OR**
  - **They have a physician's note with a specific alternate diagnosis explaining the symptoms**

# What Happens If There is a Positive Case?

- The school will work closely with the local department of health
- Exposures are considered face-to-face, more than 10 minutes and less than 6 feet.
- **Though masking significantly lowers risk, to err on side of caution, masks will not be considered when making determination on quarantining**
- Most likely students or teachers exposed to the index case in the same class will be quarantined for 14 days UNLESS they can attest to the 6 feet/10 min rule
- Reducing class sizes and cohorting limits the amount of people who might be quarantined
- If there is a positive case, a note will go out to the school
- The child/teacher will not be identified, but DOH will work with the school to see who was exposed. Each exposed person will get a phone call
- With 1 case, the school will likely not be shut down. Multiple cases may result in a shut down

# Summary- How do you open school safely?

- Much safer to open if you have low prevalence of disease
- Parents must screen at home & not send kids to school with symptoms or if exposed
- Must require masks to be safe. Almost everyone can wear a mask
- Maximize physical distancing at all times
- Improve environmental controls (Cleaning and ventilation)
- Minimize high exposure situations
- We will be conservative in exclusion policies for sick children, but mindful of the need to provide appropriate virtual education