

YGW COVID FAQ

Opening school at this time is a bracha and a responsibility. It is imperative that the entire Yeshiva community does all we can to prevent the occurrence of transmission within our school to protect lives as well as to the Chillul Hashem and Bitul Torah that would result from such an occurrence. There are many questions that we all have, and will continue to have, as this is a very fluid situation and best practices are constantly changing. Below is guidance for some of the most frequently asked questions.

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Travel, Simchas, and Social Distancing

Do students need to be tested for covid before school?

Any student who visited or returns from a high risk location or who engaged in other high risk activities (non-distanced simcha for example) MUST quarantine and be tested prior to school per Yeshiva protocol. For other students, testing is not mandatory but is recommended. Community wide testing has been arranged for on Sunday 8/30 and Thursday 9/3 to enable easy access to testing.

What is considered a high risk location?

A high risk location, or “hotspot”, is defined as 25 new cases per day per 100,000 by Harvard Global Health page. Hotspot locations are indicated in red. If either the county or state that the student visited is red, then the student must quarantine. As the situation is constantly evolving, please recheck the area in question prior to each travel incidence.

<https://globalepidemics.org/key-metrics-for-covid-suppression/>

Do students need to be tested following Sukkos break?

Any student who travels to a high risk area, who engages in a high risk activity or who has been exposed to a covid positive individual is obligated to quarantine with or without testing per YGW policy. This applies during Sukkos break, as well as any time throughout the year.

Are staff held accountable to the same standards as students?

Absolutely. The staff will be held to the same safety standards as the students and are highly committed to mask compliance, social distancing, and hand hygiene. Like the students, staff will voluntarily quarantine if they are exposed to a covid-positive individual or if they engage in any high risk activity. The staff has/will receive extensive training and education on the use of and background to all Yeshiva policies and protocols.

I know that Yeshiva has students who commute from Baltimore and other locations outside of Montgomery County. How does that affect the Yeshiva’s decisions to close or open the school?

The Yeshiva covid team will continuously monitor the metrics of not only Montgomery County but also the metrics of all counties where our students live. If cases rise in a neighboring county and if the area enters the “hotspot” category, students living in that particular county may need to transition to virtual learning.

How about boarders who come from out of state? Are they required to quarantine or are they subject to different guidelines?

Boarder students will be required to abide by the same travel protocols as any other student. Thus a boarding student who is arriving from a high risk location will need to quarantine before attending in-person school. This is relevant prior to the start of the school year as well as after Yamim Tovim or other times when the student spends time in his home state. Boarders who arrive from out of state locations that are not high risk do not need to take any additional precautions as long as their travel was done in a fully careful, masked, and distanced manner.

While the boarders reside in our community, there are no differences between them and non-boarding students in this regard.

We have a family wedding coming up that we want our child to attend, but we don't want them to have to quarantine and miss in-person school. Is it possible for them to go?

There is a lot of variability in the types and safety of simchas and large gatherings. A simcha that is held entirely outdoors in full compliance with mask wearing and social distancing would not be considered a high risk activity and any attendees would not need to quarantine. Similarly, a simcha held indoors in a venue that meets state and county capacity regulations would also not be considered high risk if all participants remained compliant with social distancing at a distance of 6 feet and wore masks throughout the event (other than during eating).

However, if a simcha is held indoors at greater capacity than state and county regulations, or if a simcha is held either indoors or outdoors and guests are not compliant with mask wearing and social distancing, then that event must be considered high risk and any student or staff who attends such an event would be required to attend school virtually for the quarantine period. This is true even if the student or staff member wore a mask for the entire simcha. We unfortunately will not be able to grant leniencies in this arena as simchas and events are known as super-spreader events for virus transmission.

My child likes to hang out with friends outside of school. How does this affect his ability to attend in-person school?

We expect that our students will behave out of school as they do in school. This applies to mode of dress, manners of behavior, and safety standards as well. It is important that students continue to see and spend time with friends at this time, but those interactions must occur with the same health promoting behaviors that are required in school. All Yeshiva students are expected to engage in social distancing and mask wearing when indoors or when 6 feet of distance cannot be maintained outdoors. We recommend outdoor distanced visits and non-contact activities.

Can we have family visit for Yom Tov?

The Yeshiva cannot legislate every aspect of our community's life outside of school. However, we highly recommend that non-family members NOT be invited into private homes. We ask that parents and families model the behavior we ask of our students which includes remaining socially distant from people who don't live in their homes.

Screening, Quarantining, and Covid Occurrences

What do I do if I have checked “yes” to one of the questions on the daily online questionnaire? What happens then?

The daily online questionnaire asks 3 short YES/NO questions. If the honest answer to all 3 questions is NO, then the student is given the green light to attend school that day. If the answer to any one of the 3 questions is YES, the student should NOT attend school and will receive an email from the school office within a short time frame that will assist the student and family in determining the next steps which are delineated in the covid assessment protocol on the YGW COVID Resource page at www.yeshiva.edu .

How will parents know if covid is circulating in the school?

The entire parent body will be notified by email in the case of any covid-positive test within the school. Parents with children in the positive individual’s cohort will be further notified about the process for transitioning to temporary remote learning and to monitor for symptoms in their child.

If a student feels sick and stays home, is covid testing automatically required?

Covid testing is not automatically required and depends on multiple factors. Please consult the covid assessment protocol to better understand when covid testing is required. Below are some additional factors to bear in mind.

Symptoms need to be new and unexplained. Thus a child with seasonal allergies in the face of an expected trigger, or a student with low grade fever following a vaccination, or student with a history of migraines who has a headache that aligns with his typical symptoms does NOT need to get covid tested. Even in such a circumstance, he may still wish to remain home until symptoms resolve.

If symptoms are new and unexplained, the student must stay home if he has any 1 primary symptom (fever, cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste/smell) or any 2 secondary symptoms. He may also want to consider staying home with even 1 secondary symptom. Covid testing will likely be recommended for any 1 primary symptom. In the case of 2 secondary symptoms, if the symptoms resolve shortly, the student may return to school once 24 hours have elapsed. If symptoms do not resolve shortly, the student’s PCP should be contacted to determine whether a covid test is necessary and what other tests may be required if an alternate diagnosis is suspected.

Alternatively, if a student has any 1 primary symptom or any 2 secondary symptoms but does not wish to get a covid test, they can also preemptively quarantine for a minimum of 10 days from symptoms onset.

Please keep in mind that the above is based on circumstances of low community transmission. If rates increase in the community, a more strict policy will be put into place.

What is the protocol in the event of a covid positive in a student?

If a student tests positive for covid, their entire pod/cohort will transition to remote learning for a 14 day quarantine period.

Family members of the covid positive student must also be considered exposed and must quarantine.

If the covid positive student carools with other families, all the carpool members will also be considered exposed and must quarantine.

The infected individual must be quarantined for a minimum of 10 days from symptoms onset or 14 days from positive test if asymptomatic, and must be symptom free for >24 hours without the use of medications.

The entire parent body will be made aware of a positive case. The identity of the positive case will remain anonymous.

The county health department will be made aware and will help guide further decisions if necessary.

What happens if a child develops symptoms at school? How will the isolation process work?

If a student acutely develops suspicious symptoms during school hours, the student will notify their teacher immediately and will be counseled to leave the classroom and move to the designated isolation room where they will self-test for fever and fill out a symptom checklist. Concurrently, the school secretary will contact the student's point of contact and request pick-up within the hour. The secretary will also alert the Yeshiva's designated covid team. If the student's condition requires that a staff member assist him, there will be a staff member who has specified training in PPE usage who will be able to attend to the student in full PPE. After the symptomatic student leaves, the isolation room will be thoroughly disinfected. Once the student is picked up, the family is requested to be in contact with their primary care physician to determine whether a covid test is required and also what alternate testing may be relevant. The family will also be in contact with the Yeshiva's covid team to further determine the next steps and when return to in-person school can be considered. If at any point a positive covid test is obtained, the family MUST alert the Yeshiva immediately.

What if more than one child develops symptoms at the same time? How will the isolation process work?

While it is unlikely that more than one individual will develop the acute onset of concerning symptoms at the same time, YGW does have additional unused rooms that can be used as back-up isolation rooms. The isolation process will remain the same, and all utilized rooms will be fully decontaminated.

What happens if multiple students all test positive for covid?

If multiple students all test positive in the same time frame and it appears that school may be the center of an outbreak, the entire school will transition to 100% remote learning until all cases are cleared and a potential safety breach is identified and rectified.

I would like to get covid results for my child as soon as possible. I saw rapid covid tests available for a great price; can we use those?

Currently the accuracy of rapid antigen tests is not as high as those of RT-PCR (“reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction”) covid tests. While a positive rapid test result is pretty accurate, a negative rapid antigen test may actually be a false negative result. A negative rapid test does not provide enough assurance that the student is actually negative for covid and therefore at this time the Yeshiva requires covid tests to be the RT-PCR form.

In-School Procedures

Can our students play sports at school? Will they have PE? Can they play during recess?

Non-contact or low contact sports can still be played at school when outside. Examples include shooting baskets individually or baseball. Masks should be worn during these activities, except in situations where students remain greater than 6 feet apart. Contact sports such as football or basketball should be avoided at this time.

My child has difficulty wearing masks for a prolonged period of time. Can they remove their mask during the day?

Students must wear masks that cover their noses and mouths at all times while indoors at school. The only exception to this is while eating, which will occur at student desks that are 6 feet from one another. However, we recognize that prolonged mask wearing is difficult and uncomfortable. To this end, teachers will allow intermittent “mask breaks” where individual students can request to be allowed out of the classroom to remove their masks at a designated outdoor location for short periods of time.

Students who remove their masks outside of designated times/areas will be asked a first time to replace the mask. If a second incidence occurs, an email will be sent home to parents suggesting that perhaps the given child might learn better in the remote environment. A third infraction will require that the child transition to remote learning for the safety of his fellow students and teachers.

After Sukkos, will the students in the Boys Division be in the same groups for general studies?

After Sukkos, students will return to in-person school in the current hybrid model with in-person limudei kodesh and virtual limudei chol. In the 2 weeks following Sukkos, the Yeshiva covid team will closely monitor the local and community metrics to observe for any possible increase in cases that could be attributed to Yom Tov. If there are no increases in cases and if the county metrics remain low, the goal is to transition to full day in-person learning by November 1st.

The student cohorts will be expanded. In this scenario, larger cohorts will be created that will be able to divide separately in the morning and the afternoon to allow for tracked general studies classes. There will be no mixing of students from one cohort to the next.

How will mask wearing be enforced in Yeshiva?

There will be dedicated staff members tasked with circulating through the Yeshiva on a regular basis to monitor mask wearing. If a student is seen without a mask, they will be reminded to keep the mask on. After a second reminder, an email will go home warning that a third such incident will require the student to learn at home remotely.