



## COVID CONVERSATIONS

### A COMMUNICATIONS GUIDE FOR PARENTS WITH COLLEGE-AGED CHILDREN RETURNING-TO-CAMPUS / RETURNING-TO-SPORT

As colleges and universities reopen campuses across the United States, most are offering safety measures to help protect students and staff from contracting the SARS-CoV-2 virus / COVID-19 disease. Safety measures are based on input from federal and local public health officials, available real-time public health data, and campus-specific logistical considerations. These measures may include regular testing with timely turnaround of results, creating greater physical distancing between those on campus (eg, blending in-person, virtual, hybrid

education models), and limiting the number of students and staff on campus.

For parents, below are sample questions to help you start or continue a conversation with your college-aged children. Decide what makes the most sense to protect your child and family's health by understanding your college student's living situation, the safety measures available on campus, and the precautions your child might need to take to minimize exposure to COVID-19 as they return to campus and sport.

## UNDERSTANDING TESTING

**Q:** *Is your college / university offering testing to students and staff? If so, how often will each person be tested?*

*As the nation continues to try to manage the COVID-19 pandemic, laboratory testing is one tool to help identify further outbreak of the virus and begin the process of [contact tracing](#) (a communications protocol to reach out to the contacts a person diagnosed with COVID-19 may have been exposed to or were in close proximity) to determine who might have been exposed.*

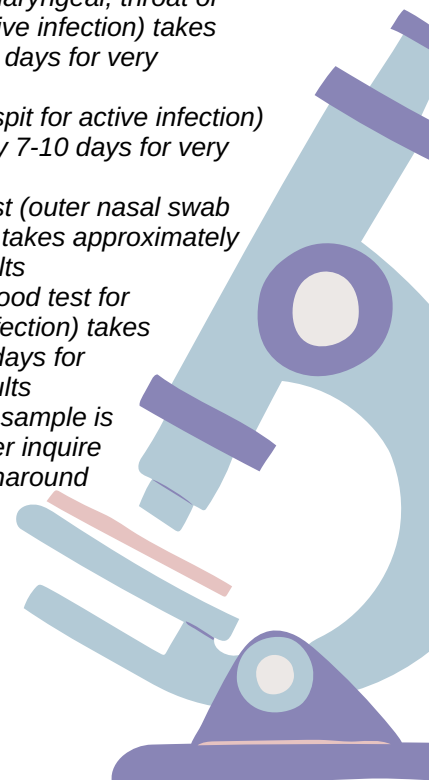
- Will the college / university offer a staggered start to the quarter / semester to help minimize the possibility of bottlenecks as students enter / return to campus?*
- Will your student be required to provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test prior to entering / returning to campus, or will they be tested upon entering / returning to campus?*
- Upon return, how often will your student be tested to ensure spreading is managed / mitigated while on campus?*
- Depending on the city / state / campus, your child may or may not be eligible to take a COVID-19 test on campus in order to conserve availability of tests and testing components for those who may need them more. Factors may include whether he / she is feeling symptoms or experiencing some of the [emergency warning signs](#) for the disease.*

**Q:** *If the college / university indicated they would offer testing on campus, what type of COVID-19 tests will be administered, and what is the estimated turnaround to receive test results?*

*Currently, there are several COVID-19 tests available. Your student's college / university may offer one or a combination of the following:*

- a PCR test (nasopharyngeal, throat or mouth swab for active infection) takes approximately 7-10 days for very accurate results*
- a PCR test (saliva spit for active infection) takes approximately 7-10 days for very accurate results*
- an antigen/rapid test (outer nasal swab for active infection) takes approximately 20 minutes for results*
- an antibody test (blood test for evidence of past infection) takes approximately 3-5 days for widely variable results*

*At the time your child's sample is collected, have him / her inquire about an estimated turnaround time for test results.*





**Q:** *What happens after the swab, spit or blood draw?*

After your child's sample is collected—depending on the college / university and the testing available on campus—samples may be tested at the on-campus laboratory, if available, shipped to a national reference laboratory for mass testing, or tested at the point of care (rapid testing). The different tests available / administered will impact the turnaround time of the results.

**Q:** *What does it mean when you receive a negative test result?*

A negative test result does not mean that your child is immune to the virus, or that he / she could not have contracted the virus after taking the test. Testing can be helpful, but only captures results from the point in time a sample is collected.

After the test, has your child been exposed to others potentially diagnosed with COVID-19? What are some physical distancing measures your child has taken since the test and will continue to take to minimize chances of exposure? Has your child reported feeling any symptoms of illness consistent with the CDC identified COVID-19 symptoms?

**Q:** *What does it mean when you receive a positive test result?*

*If your child has reported feeling mild or no symptoms of illness, encourage him / her to follow campus guidance or, if protocols are not available, to:*

- *stay at home or in the dorm away from others to minimize spreading the virus and follow the on-campus guidelines, except if medical care is needed*
- *drink plenty of water and other clear liquids to prevent dehydration*
- *continue to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and wash hands with soap and water*
- *monitor symptoms*

*Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. If symptoms get worse, he / she should call their primary care physician, on campus health care provider, clinician advice line, or telemedicine provider right away.*

**Q:** *What is the college / university's plan for when a fellow student or faculty tests positive for COVID-19?*

Each campus may have different protocols to manage the health and safety of those who may have been diagnosed with a positive test result (eg, requiring those who test COVID-19 positive to relocate to a COVID-19 dorm or residential building for quarantining), and those who may have been in contact with those individuals.

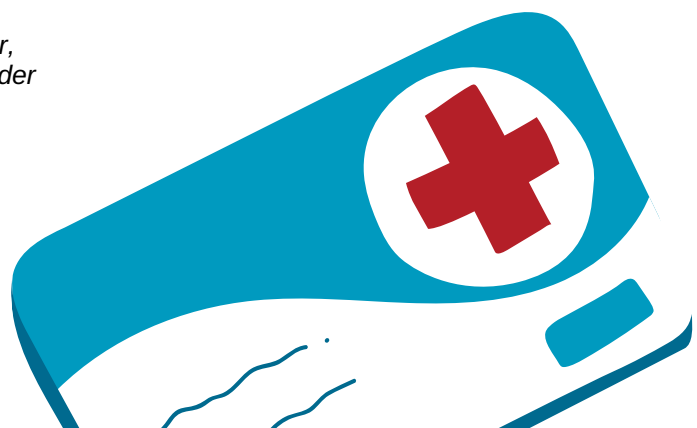
Is there a dorm / apartment-wide notification system for fellow students to test / retest, self-quarantine, or take additional precautions?

For those who might be required to self-quarantine, what protocols might be available to ensure that student's basic health and nutrition needs might continue to be met? Will there be packaged food deliveries to those quarantined? How might the college / university / professors work with the students to minimize disruptions of class assignments and submissions?

**Q:** *What health care / financial-related paperwork might the college / university require, if any?*

Each college / university may have different protocols to manage the health and safety of students and faculty. Some campuses might require additional paperwork from those entering / returning to campus. For example:

- *students, with their parents, might be asked to complete waivers for medical care and financial considerations.*
- *are the students covered under their parents' health insurance policy or will they opt-in to the college / university's health care plan?*
- *for out-of-state students, if under a parent's health insurance plan, does the policy include out-of-state care, hospitalizations or prescriptions?*





## UNDERSTANDING PHYSICAL DISTANCING

**Q:** *What is your college / university doing to engage and encourage everyone on / near campus to practice preventive behaviors? Are there measures to address bottlenecks or direct the flow of foot traffic to minimize crowds from gathering outside of classrooms, lunchrooms or other shared common areas? Has the college / university provided guidance on non-sanctioned events (eg, on or off-campus parties, group gatherings)? Will the college / university require students and faculty to pledge to following its COVID-19 safety guidances?*

**Q:** *What are your room and board accommodations this year? Will you be sharing your living space (eg, communal-use bathrooms, kitchens and living room) with others? If sharing your living space, could the windows be opened safely to create greater ventilation in the room? Would it be possible to create a physical distance of approximately six feet between yourself and others? How often will the shared living spaces be cleaned and disinfected?*

If not possible to physically distance in a common space, and it is unclear if others in the room have been exposed to COVID-19, does your child need to be in that communal space at the same time?

**Q:** *Is your college / university offering virtual, in-person or hybrid learning to accommodate COVID-19 safety precautions? If in-person only, could the classroom windows be opened safely to offer greater ventilation in the room? Would it be possible to create a physical distance of approximately six feet between yourself and nearby students? How often will the classrooms / communal spaces be cleaned and disinfected?*

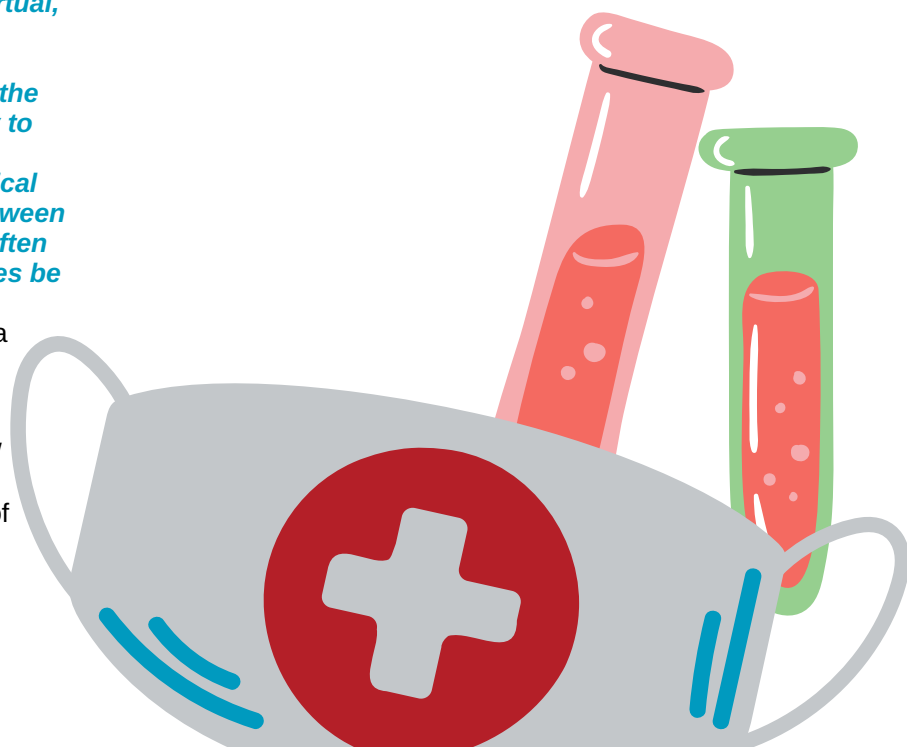
If not possible to physically distance for a specific class, might your child be able consider taking that class virtually?

If classes are in-person, will the college / university offer a staggered start to classes to help minimize the possibility of bottlenecks as students enter / exit in-person classes?

**Q:** *What are your food choices to minimize exposure to possible airborne viruses? For example, consider packaged meals over self-service buffet tables without lid coverings.*

**Q:** *What are some ways to minimize your likelihood of contracting COVID-19? There are basic, everyday things your child could do to minimize the risks of contracting COVID-19. This includes physical distancing from others (at least six feet from others), using cloth face coverings, use of [cohorting](#) (eg, creating “pods” of students/peers/friends who stay together to minimize exposure to others across the campus, limiting or cancelling participation in activities where physical distancing is not feasible, regularly cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, washing hands with soap and water after touching objects or surfaces, and avoid touching their face (eyes, nose, and mouth) before washing their hands.*

Social gatherings are inherently a part of the college experience. While there likely will not be formal college or university-sanctioned events, social gatherings likely will continue. If large groups gather, parties and sporting events could become super spreader events. What precautions might your child take to mitigate possible exposure to COVID-19 at social gatherings?





## MONITORING FOR SYMPTOMS

**Q:** *Will the campus offer regular temperature checks of those entering communal buildings / classrooms?*

**Q:** *How will you monitor for and respond to COVID-19 symptoms in your dorm / apartment / at home?*

Parents: also take into consideration as to whether your child has an underlying health condition, like a compromised immune system, that might make him / her more susceptible to contracting other illnesses.

## TRAVELING DURING A PANDEMIC

If your child is entering / returning to an out of city or out of state college or university, will driving or flying be required? If the campus is larger, will your child require use of the on campus public transportation system? If any of the above, what precautions might your child take to mitigate possible exposure to COVID-19?

During the holidays or breaks, will your child be traveling home? If so, will he/she be tested on campus prior to returning home? Do you have others in your household who may have an underlying health condition, like a compromised immune system, that might make them more susceptible to contracting other illnesses?

Does the state within which your child's college / university require affidavit requirements to assure that travelers into the state have tested negative within a predetermined timeline?

## ABOUT THE COLLEGE OF AMERICAN PATHOLOGISTS

As the world's largest organization of board-certified pathologists—the physicians on the frontlines of testing, biopsy and diagnose of disease—and leading provider of laboratory accreditation and proficiency testing programs, the College of American Pathologists serves patients, pathologists, and the public by fostering and advocating excellence in the practice in the practice of pathology and laboratory medicine worldwide. For more information, read the [CAP Annual Report](#) or at [cap.org](http://cap.org).

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

There may be additional, official and unofficial campus-specific resources available to help parents keep up to date on developments relevant to their child's health. Some resources may include virtual town halls and Facebook live presentations intended for students and / or parents, campus-specific social media groups, etc.

## REFERENCES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Preparing for a Safe Return to School. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/prepare-safe-return.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Symptoms. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Contact Tracing for COVID-19. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/contact-tracing.html>

