



## Faculty/Instructors/Staff—Twin Cities Campus

# What to do if a student is sick or has been exposed to COVID-19

## Classroom, advising, or other learning or student life setting

### Overview

- When a student discloses they have **tested positive for COVID-19 or been notified of a COVID-19 exposure**, faculty, instructors, and staff must closely follow Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) [guidelines](#) as directed by the University's [Health Emergency Response Office](#) (HERO). This document is designed to describe those guidelines. Any future changes to the guidelines will be broadly communicated to the University community.
- Students with a positive COVID-19 test will be interviewed by state or local public health investigators to review isolation requirements and to determine whether others may have been exposed. *Exposure is defined as close contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 case closer than 6 feet for 15 minutes or more.* It is important to note that “contacts of contacts” are not considered exposed to COVID-19.

State and local public health officials are responsible for determining whether others may have been exposed and for ensuring those persons are notified either by the investigators assigned to the case or by trained contact tracers. Departments in the University may be asked by local or state public health officials to provide information or notification assistance in some instances.

On the Twin Cities Campus, the primary liaisons to state and local health investigators are [Boynton Health](#) and HERO (for both, contact **612-625-3222**).

For students in isolation, instructors and staff should arrange accommodations for class participation (regardless of modality), consistent with [UMN policy](#) for accommodations for legitimate absences due to illness. A student in isolation should not be referred to the Disability Resource Center (DRC), but any preexisting accommodations requested via the DRC should continue to be provided.

- Students **notified of exposure** are advised to consult with Boynton Nurse Line at **612-625-3222** (answered 24/7), which will provide guidance on how to access a COVID-19 test. Tests are recommended for all close contacts of known cases.

These students will be advised by public health officials to quarantine for a specified period of time.

For students in quarantine, instructors and staff should arrange accommodations for class participation (regardless of modality), consistent with [UMN policy](#) for accommodations for legitimate absences due to illness. A quarantined student should not be referred to the Disability Resource Center (DRC), but any preexisting accommodations requested via the DRC should continue to be provided.

- Confidentiality of personal health information is paramount at all times. Instructors and staff **may not** disclose to classes, colleagues, or others that someone is sick, has a positive COVID-19 test, or is in quarantine due to exposure. If you believe that physical distancing guidelines have not been followed and that there has been a potential exposure, inform your department head/supervisor, who in turn should notify HERO (contact Boynton Health, **612-625-3222**) to determine if local or state public health investigators should be notified. No further steps or notifications should be undertaken unless directed by Boynton Health, HERO, or local or state public health officials. Names and identifying information should not be disclosed under any circumstances.
- All members of the University community must comply with University guidelines and directives to reduce risk of exposure to COVID-19, including physical distancing in all settings and wearing [face coverings](#) in all indoor settings (with limited exceptions). The University's shared commitment is captured in [Stop the Spread of COVID-19](#).

## What to do if a student appears to be sick or tells you they may have been exposed to COVID-19

### Instructors and staff *should*:

- **Advise the student** to contact the Boynton Nurse Line at **612-625-3222** (answered 24/7) or another trusted health care provider (even if the student appears to be asymptomatic).  
Boynton Health or health care providers will provide guidance on whether a test is needed, where to find testing site locations, and whether students should stay home from classes, work, and other activities. Testing is available at Boynton Health for students when clinically recommended through [MTest](#).
- **Inform your department head/supervisor** if you believe that physical distancing guidelines have not been followed, and there has been a potential exposure on campus. Names and identifying information should not be disclosed. The department head/supervisor in turn should notify HERO (contact Boynton Health, **612-625-3222**) to determine if local or state public health investigators should be notified.  
*Exposure is defined as close contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 case closer than 6 feet for 15 minutes or more. Note that classrooms maintaining reduced density, 6-foot physical distancing, face coverings, and other protocols are designed to limit opportunities for exposure.*
- **Follow guidance** of Boynton Health, HERO, and/or state or local health officials if they determine that others may have been exposed and need to be notified, tested, and provided guidance on required quarantine.
- **Arrange instructional accommodations if required:** If a student must isolate or quarantine, instructors and staff should arrange accommodations for class participation (regardless of modality), as guided by [UMN policy](#) for legitimate absences due to illness. (Refer to the policy and [related FAQs](#) for guidance). A student in isolation or quarantine should not be referred to the Disability Resource Center (DRC), but any preexisting accommodations requested via the DRC should continue to be provided.
- **Advise students of mental health resources when appropriate:** Students who are feeling stressed or overwhelmed amid the challenges of COVID-19 should be encouraged to call the U of M Crisis Line at 612-301-4673 anytime or text "UMN" to 61222 on evenings and weekends.

### Instructors and staff ***should not:***

- **Do any investigating or contact tracing.** Local and state public health officials conduct case investigations and will provide guidance and direction if they determine others need to be notified of a potential exposure. In some instances, departments in the University may be asked to assist with this, but this must be specifically requested and guided by HERO, Boynton Health, and/or state and local health officials. Confidentiality of private health information is paramount at all times, and any request will be accompanied by specific instructions and guidance.
- **Disclose to anyone** that a student is sick, has a positive COVID-19 test, or is in quarantine due to exposure. Each individual's health status is protected by data privacy laws. Do not tell classes, department colleagues, student groups, teams, etc. of suspected or confirmed positive cases or individuals quarantined due to exposure unless instructed to do so by public health officials.
- **Communicate in any way about a positive case** (suspected or confirmed)—including messages within department/unit/college—without guidance from HERO in consultation from University Relations, to ensure that we comply with [HIPAA privacy regulations](#), [FERPA guidelines](#), and [Minnesota Government Data Practices Act requirements](#). (*Contact HERO via Boynton at 612-625-3222*).
- **Unilaterally change modality of class** before receiving guidance by health investigators and undertaking consultation with your department chair/unit head at a minimum and others as appropriate. Consultation by departments should engage HERO, collegiate deans, and the provost. Each instructor, together with their department or program, should develop contingency plans in case an early pivot becomes necessary.

## What to do if public health investigators determine that a positive case may have exposed others to COVID-19

### Instructors and staff ***should:***

- **Follow guidance** of HERO, Boynton Health, and/or state or local health officials if they determine that others may have been exposed and need to be notified of that exposure with instructions on testing and quarantine.
- **Inform your department head/supervisor** if you believe that physical distancing guidelines have not been followed and you have observed a potential exposure.  
*Exposure is defined as close contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 case closer than 6 feet for 15 minutes or more. Note that classrooms maintaining 6-foot physical distancing, face coverings, and other protocols are designed to limit opportunities for exposure*
- **Follow communications guidance** of Boynton Health, HERO and/or public health investigators, in consultation with University Relations. Communications are likely to go out only to those determined to have a significantly increased exposure risk as defined by [MDH guidelines](#). Confidentiality of individual student health information must be maintained in accord with [HIPAA privacy regulations](#), [FERPA guidelines](#), and [Minnesota Government Data Practices Act requirements](#).
- **Consult with HERO and your department head or supervisor** to determine whether there is a need to pivot instructional modalities. Consultation should also engage collegiate deans and the provost. Each instructor, together with their department or program, should develop contingency plans in case an early pivot becomes necessary.

## Expectations for students

### Students *should*:

- Self-monitor health every day for four critical symptoms: fever, respiratory symptoms, sore throat, or dry cough.  
*Broader list of COVID-19 symptoms: fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, loss of taste/smell, or nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea*
- Not attend in-person classes, student jobs, internships, or clinical practicums if they have any symptoms, until advised by Boynton or healthcare providers.
- Contact the Boynton Nurse Line at **612-625-3222** or consult with their healthcare provider if they feel sick or believe that they may have been exposed to COVID-19.
- Follow guidance from Boynton or health care providers about whether a test is needed, based on MDH guidelines and where to find testing site locations.
- If confirmed positive test for COVID-19: Isolate as directed by health care professionals and public health officials.
- If exposed to COVID-19: Quarantine as directed by health care professionals and public health officials. *Exposure is defined as close contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 case closer than 6 feet for 15 minutes or more. Note that classrooms maintaining 6-foot physical distancing, face coverings, and other protocols are designed to limit opportunities for exposure.*
- Provide information if requested by a public health investigator who will determine whether others may have been exposed. Assist in notifying those exposed as guided by a public health investigator.
- Follow healthcare provider or public health investigator guidance on when to return to in-person activities.
- If instructed to isolate or quarantine (symptomatic or asymptomatic): Contact your instructor as needed to request accommodations for classes as guided by [UMN policy](#) for accommodations for legitimate absences due to illness. (Refer to the policy and [related FAQs](#) for guidance.) It is not necessary to contact the disability resources office.
- If serious medical complications substantially limit daily life activities and require accommodation to enable continued access to education: Contact the campus Disability Resources office. On the Twin Cities campus, contact your Access Consultant if already working with the Disability Resource Center. Otherwise, contact Student Access at [drc@umn.edu](mailto:drc@umn.edu).
- If in a University residence hall: Follow guidance from Boynton (612-625-3222) to arrange housing and support for any necessary isolation or quarantine period. *See guidance flowcharts: Steps for students to take if living [on campus](#) or [off campus](#).*
- If feeling stressed or overwhelmed amid the challenges of COVID-19: Call the U of M Crisis Line at 612-301-4673 anytime or text "UMN" to 61222 on evenings and weekends.