

Minnesota Chapter

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American Academy of Pediatrics

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Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

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MNAAP RSV Return to School Guidance

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The Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics shares with the state's school leaders, teachers and staff a vested interest in preventing the spread of illness among school-age children and teens so that they may have healthy, productive days.

It is understandable that after years of stress and uncertainty brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, increased cases of other respiratory illness, such as RSV, would bring about a desire for extreme caution. However, current guidance from the national American Academy of Pediatrics (Clinical Practice Guideline: The Diagnosis, Management, and Prevention of Bronchiolitis, 2014) states that testing for RSV is **not** indicated for the majority of children.

Most children with RSV will have runny nose, cough and some, may have fever, similar to many other viral illnesses. In most outpatient settings for children with bronchiolitis, routine specific respiratory viral testing has little effect on management and is not recommended.

Requiring testing of children, particularly asymptomatic children, for RSV to return to a group setting is not consistent with medical recommendations. RSV tests can stay positive for several weeks post-infection and should not be used to test for cure.

The decision to return to school should be based on clinical symptoms, including the child being fever free for at least 24 hours, lack of shortness of breath and some improvement of overall symptoms. Masking upon return from any upper respiratory illness also helps prevent transmission and should be encouraged in children older than two years of age upon return to group settings after an acute respiratory illness until symptoms completely resolve. **We recommend following these community standard guidelines for returning to school, rather than requiring a letter from a physician.**

We ask Minnesota school leaders, teachers and staff to encourage families and caregivers to follow reasonable procedures to help prevent the spread of respiratory illness in the school setting. There are many viruses that cause similar respiratory illnesses and all should be treated with good hand washing hygiene and keeping a sick child home while they are symptomatic.