



Cowley County Respiratory Infection Guidance

The CDC and KDHE recently released updated respiratory virus guidance. The guidance is a consolidated methodology for responding to illnesses like COVID-19, RSV, Influenza, and other easily spread respiratory viral infections.

The crux of the guidance has not changed. To prevent illness, follow the tried-and-true methods of being vaccinated, isolating, or avoiding those who are ill, and masking when appropriate.

If you become ill do the following:

STEP #1

- STAY HOME while you are sick, especially if you have a fever! This is when you are generally most contagious.
- Not all infections will present with a fever, so if you are coughing, have a headache, muscle aches and feel tired or rundown STAY HOME!
- **DO NOT** return to normal activity if you continue to have a fever or other symptoms. You must be fever free for a full 24 hours without medication.

STEP #2

- You can return to normal activities when your symptoms pass, and you feel better (like you felt before you became ill). But for FIVE DAYS, you should wear a mask, come to the Health Department to be tested, and stay away from people at high risk for complications from infection, such as the very young, the elderly, or those who are immunocompromised.

The reasoning behind all of this is complex. What we know is that people experience different levels of illness. Just like in the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, requiring people to stay home for five days may have been just right for many, but not enough for some and too much for others.

The concern that remains is that people don't think about the fact that everyone becomes ill and recovers at different intervals. We want to play in the big game, so we rush back to school; we don't have sick days, so we rush back to work; or we claim that we never get sick even though we can't walk and talk without having a coughing fit that doubles us over.

We all must consider not only our personal health but the health of others. If you send a child to school ill and they get sent back home, they likely will have spread the illness to other students and teachers, causing more widespread illness in the community. We want everyone to be healthy and certainly want all the activities in a community to occur. For that to happen, refer to **STEP #1** and stay home when sick. Everyone will be better off if we do that simple thing.