



**COVID-19 MESSAGES FOR
PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN**

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PHYSICAL HEALTH





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AUTHORS AND REVIEWERS





1. SCHOOL

SHOULD MY CHILD GO BACK TO SCHOOL?

Yes. The experts say it is better for most children to be at school.

- It is understandable that parents may feel worried about their children returning to school. But, it's important to note **children are less likely than adults to catch COVID-19, and most children will not be sick at all or will only have a mild flu-like illness.**
- Children with asthma, allergies and HIV (on treatment) can go to school.
- If your child has any other illnesses, discuss the risk of going to school with your doctor.

2. HEALTH & SAFETY AT SCHOOL

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO PROTECT MY CHILD FROM GETTING OR PASSING ON COVID-19 AT SCHOOL?

Tell your child to take care like this:

- If older than 2, and if they are able, wear a cloth mask that covers your nose and mouth
- Social distancing – keep at least 1 to 2 metres away from others
- No touching of others! Avoid hugging and high-fives
- Wash or sanitize hands often: when arriving at school, before & after eating or going to the toilet, and if you touch someone by mistake. Try to not touch your face or mask.
- Do not share cups, utensils, stationery or bottles with others.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue. Throw the used tissue into a bin.
- Follow the school rules about where and when you can go into and out of the school.
- If your child (or someone at home), is unwell, they must not go to school.





3. CHILDREN WEARING MASKS

WHAT DOES MY CHILD NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MASKS?

Remind your child:

- Wear your mask if using public transport to travel to school
- Make sure your mask covers your mouth and nose.
- Only remove the mask to eat or drink (and store it safely).
- Touch only the straps when you take it off or put it on. Avoid touching the front of the mask,
- Have a spare mask to use in case it gets wet or is used. Put the used mask into a container or brown paper bag until you can wash it.
- Do not share masks with friends: if you do not have a mask, use a scarf or bandana
- Do not leave used masks lying around - they will have droplets from breathing or coughing or sneezing that may contain the virus.
- Wash mask with soap and hot water. Dry in the sun and iron it to disinfect it.

WHAT CAN I DO IF MY CHILD DOES NOT LIKE TO WEAR A MASK?

If your children are scared or uncomfortable wearing a face mask:

- Let them practice wearing and cleaning the mask at home.
- Read books to your children or tell reassuring stories about wearing masks.
- Decorate the masks so they are more personal or fun.
- Let them make a mask for a favourite toy.
- Remember children under two should not be made to wear masks.





4. PREVENTION & FAKE NEWS

I HAVE HEARD THAT THERE ARE SOME MEDICINES AND REMEDIES I CAN GIVE MY CHILD TO PREVENT THEM GETTING COVID-19 - IS IT TRUE?

Be careful of “fake news”!

- There is a lot of false and incorrect information being passed around at this time.
- There are no specific supplements or vitamins or herbs or medicines that prevent COVID-19 in children (or adults)
- To stay healthy, eat healthy food (lots of fresh fruit and vegetables), exercise every day, get enough sleep and try to not worry too much.





5. SYMPTOMS

HOW WILL I KNOW IF MY CHILD HAS COVID-19? AND WHAT MUST I DO?

Your child might have COVID-19 if they have any of these symptoms: cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, loss of sense of smell or taste with or without fever, weakness, sore muscles or diarrhoea. A child might also have the COVID-19 infection and be well, without any symptoms.

A well person who has been in close contact with someone known to have COVID-19 may have the infection.

What to do?

Like other types of flu, there is no specific treatment for COVID-19

- Give paracetamol for fever or pain
- Your child and all others in your home must stay home in self-isolation for 14 days
- For most children, COVID-19 testing will only be done if they need to stay in hospital
- Rest and a healthy diet can help

If you are worried about your child (they are struggling to breathe, are floppy and very weak):

- If you think it is an emergency, call an ambulance;
- Or, call your regular clinic or doctor for advice.





6. TRANSMISSION OF COVID-19 BY A CHILD

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT MY CHILD PASSING ON COVID-19 AT HOME?

If there is someone at home older than 65 or who has obesity or an illness like diabetes, high blood pressure, or a lung disease. Like other types of flu, there is no specific treatment for COVID-19.

- All children over two need to wear a mask and always maintain a safe distance (2 metres) from the person at risk.
- The person at risk needs to use their own towel, cup, cutlery & crockery. Wash these separately.
- All shared surfaces (kitchen, bathroom) in the home must be cleaned with bleach regularly. Be sure to store bleach safely and out of the reach of children!

7. CHILDREN IN CONTACT WITH PERSON WITH COVID-19

WHAT IF MY CHILD IS IN CONTACT WITH SOMEONE WITH COVID-19?

It depends on if they are a “close contact” or not. A “close contact” is someone who was less than 1m from your child for more than 15 minutes and either one or both people were not wearing a mask.

- **Home contact:** will be a close contact, so your child needs to stay home for 14 days, even if they are well and not showing any symptoms of COVID-19.
- **School contact:** If the person (teacher or another learner) is a close contact, your child must also stay home for 14 days.
- If not a close contact, there is no need to stay home.





8. PUBLIC SPACES

HOW CAN I PROTECT MY CHILDREN WHEN THEY GO OUTSIDE FOR EXERCISE OR TO SCHOOL?

In addition to **wearing a mask** for children two years and over:

- Remind your children to physically distance by keeping about 1-2 metres away from other people, including their friends.
- Do not use playground equipment or other things strangers may have touched.
- Hand sanitise frequently and wash your childrens' hands when they return home.

Teach your children:

- How to safely use hand sanitiser: rub hands until it they are completely dry.
- How to safely wash their hands: wet their hands, rub soap for 20 seconds while singing a favourite song, and rinse.
- Respiratory hygiene. This means coughing or sneezing into their bent elbow covering mouth and nose, or into a tissue which they must then throw straight away into a closed container and then wash their hands.
- To avoid touching their faces.

9. INFECTION SPREAD

CAN BABIES AND CHILDREN GET COVID-19?

Yes, children can get COVID-19, BUT they are less likely to get it than adults. This is good news!

CAN MY BABY OR CHILD PASS COVID-19 ON TO ME?

It is possible, BUT it is much less likely than infection spreading from an adult to a child. This is good news!





10. EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON BABIES AND CHILDREN

HOW DOES COVID-19 AFFECT BABIES AND CHILDREN?

- They often have no symptoms or have much milder symptoms than adults
- The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar in children and adults.
- The symptoms are like a cold or flu: the child may have fever, runny nose and be coughing. Sometimes they have vomiting and diarrhoea.

11. LONG-TERM HEALTH PROBLEMS AND CHILDREN

ARE THERE ANY RISKS FOR CHILDREN WHO GET ILL WITH COVID-19?

If children have **some other long-term health problem/s**, they can get more sick with COVID-19. These are children with medical conditions who need to see doctors or attend clinics regularly. Some examples are: children who have diabetes, heart disease, asthma, TB, cancer, kidney disease, cerebral palsy and HIV. If your child has one of these conditions they may need to stay at home and avoid contact with others (adults and children). They may need to stay home from school – discuss this with your child’s clinic or doctor. Members of the family should take extra care with social distancing, hand washing and wearing cloth masks when around the child.





12. HOSPITALISATION

WHAT CAN I EXPECT IF MY CHILD HAS TO BE ADMITTED TO HOSPITAL?

If your child is unwell and needs to stay in the hospital, the doctor will take a swab from your child's nose and/or mouth to test for the virus that causes COVID-19. This is uncomfortable but not usually painful. The results are usually available after 2-3 days. The nurses and doctors caring for your child will wear extra protective clothing until the results of your child's test is known. Some hospitals will also perform a COVID-19 test on the adult caregiver/parent who will stay with the child in the ward. This is because some children and adults can have COVID-19 infection but not have any symptoms. Depending on whether your child tests COVID-19 negative or positive, they will be admitted to different wards at the hospital.

HOW CAN I PREPARE MY CHILD IF THEY NEED TO BE ADMITTED TO HOSPITAL?

You can help to prepare your child by telling them that everyone at the hospital will be wearing masks and sometimes other protective clothing, to keep the COVID-19 virus from spreading. You can tell them that they may need to have some tests, such as the nose swab and blood tests, but you will be able to stay with them.

WHAT AM I ALLOWED AND NOT ALLOWED TO TAKE WITH ME?

Please bring your cloth masks, your child's Road to Health Booklet, your ID and cell phone. Generally, hospitals prefer families not to bring extra blankets and clothes for the child, as these may have the virus on them.

WILL I BE ALLOWED TO STAY WITH MY CHILD?

If you have not had contact with COVID-19 infected persons in the last 2 weeks and no current symptoms of COVID-19 infection, you should be able to stay with your child in most wards, except if your child is in the intensive care unit (ICU). If you have COVID-19 symptoms, or have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 10 days, you will not be able to stay with your child. You can ask that another family member who is well comes to stay with your child in hospital in your place.





13. SHOWING SYMPTOMS OF SICKNESS

WHAT DO I DO IF MY CHILD BECOMES VERY SICK AND I AM NOT SURE IF IT IS COVID-19 ?

You may be worried about your child if they seem more sick than just a usual cold or flu. Maybe they are not eating, are breathing fast, have no energy, do not want to play, are very hot, have ongoing diarrhoea. Maybe they have a rash, marks on the hands and feet or a red tongue and mouth. Or they may have any other danger sign of illness (see your child's Road to Health Book). If so, your child must be taken to a clinic or doctor or hospital, by an adult who is not positive for COVID -19, if possible. Tell the doctor or clinic staff if there is anyone at home who is sick with COVID-19.

14. SANITISERS AND DISINFECTANT USE AT HOME

HOW DO I SAFELY USE AND STORE SANITISERS AND DISINFECTANTS AT HOME?

There is more use of bleach solutions and hand sanitisers at this time – make sure they are **OUT OF THE REACH OF ALL CHILDREN.**

- Do not put these solutions in containers where they may be mistaken for soft drinks or water
- Wash all children's eating utensils and toys that they may put into their mouths with soapy water
- Don't wipe down toys and eating utensils of children with bleach solutions, this will be poisonous for children when they put it into their mouths. Rather use a soapy water solution.
- Older children can be involved in their own care. It is helpful for them to know the reasons for what you ask them to do.
- Children's hands must be washed often, especially before and after meals. Also, as many times in-between meals as is practical. Normal soap and water is best.
- You can play a little game with children and teach them to sing a song while washing hands





15. CARING FOR CHILDREN IF PARENT HAS COVID-19

HOW SHOULD I LOOK AFTER MY CHILD IF I HAVE COVID-19?

People who have COVID-19 should isolate from others so the virus does not spread to others. Your health worker will tell you how many days you should isolate for. Discuss with them if it is possible to isolate at home or in a health facility. Isolation means staying away from other people and not going out at all.

If there is anyone else in your household who can help you (who does not have COVID-19) ask them to help with caring for your children as much as possible.

If you need to look after your children while you have COVID-19 and are self-isolating at home:

General caregiving:

- Avoid kissing babies and children as much as possible. Use eye contact and smiling and play games like peek-a-boo from a safe distance (2 meters or at least two chairs in between you)
- Wear a cloth mask when in contact with your child. Do not touch your face.
- Don't touch the eyes or mouth of your baby or child
- Don't blow onto your child's face
- Take care to keep your eating utensils, towels and face mask separate from your children's and to wash these separately from those of the rest of the family.
- After coughing and sneezing into a tissue or your elbow, throw the tissue away.
- Wash hands immediately with soap and water for 20 seconds
- Wash or sanitise your hands before and after touching anything belonging to the baby (like a toy)

Meal Times:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before preparing meals or feeding your children
- Wipe down all food preparation surfaces with soap and water or diluted bleach solution. Keep bleach out of reach of children. It can be very poisonous.
- For babies older than 6 months, prepare meals in advance to feed your child at least 5 times a day
- For older children, try to prepare food so that there are at least three meals a day available





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