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KEEPING YOUR HOUSEHOLD SAFE AS CHILDREN RETURN TO IN-PERSON SCHOOL DURING THE PANDEMIC

As some children across the country return to school in-person during the COVID-19 pandemic, many parents are wondering how they can keep their school-aged children—and everyone in their household—safe.

In addition to following the advice and precautions set forth by your children's school, there are things you can do at home to protect your children and household during these times.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has prepared recommendations for parents with children returning to in-person class. These recommendations are discussed in this article.

Preparing for Your Child's Return to School

Consider these recommendations to keep your child or children safe as they attend school in person:

- Make sure your child is up to date with all [recommended vaccines](#), including influenza. All school-aged children should get an influenza (flu) vaccine every season, with [rare exceptions](#). This is especially important this year because the CDC does not yet know if being sick with COVID-19 at the same time as the flu will result in more severe illness.
- Develop a plan as a family to protect household members who are [at increased risk for severe illness](#).

- Make sure your information is current at school, including emergency contacts and individuals authorized to pick up your child(ren) from school. If that list includes anyone who is at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19, consider identifying an alternate person.
- Be familiar with your school's plan for how they will communicate with families when a positive case or exposure to someone with COVID-19 is identified, and ensure student privacy is upheld.
- Plan for possible school closures or periods of quarantine. If transmission is increasing in your community, or if multiple children or staff test positive for COVID-19, the school building might close. Similarly, if a close contact of your child (within or outside of school) tests positive for COVID-19, your child may need to stay home for a two-week quarantine period. You may need to consider the feasibility of teleworking, taking leave from work or identifying someone who can supervise your child in the event of school building closures or quarantine.

- Plan for transportation:
 - If your child rides a bus, plan for your child to wear a mask on the bus, and talk to your child about the importance of following bus rules and any spaced seating rules.
 - If carpooling, plan on every child in the carpool and the driver wearing masks for the entire trip. Consider finding families within your child's group or class at school to be part of the carpool.
- Talk to your school administrators and teachers about their plans for physical education and physical activity (e.g., recess).
- Ask how your school plans to help ensure that students are following practices to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

In addition to these CDC recommendations, be sure to ask school administrators about any unique needs or arrangements your child or children may have.

Creating a Daily Routine With Children

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, daily schooltime routines will look different, especially for those going to school in person. Consider adding these steps to your daily routine:

- Review and practice proper [hand-washing techniques](#) at home, especially before and after eating, sneezing, coughing and adjusting a mask. Make [hand-washing fun](#), and explain to your child why it's important.
- Develop daily routines before and after school—for example, things to pack for school in the morning (like hand sanitizer and an additional mask) and things to do when you return home (like washing hands immediately and [washing masks](#)).
- [Talk](#) to your child about precautions to take at school. Children may be advised to:
 - Wash and sanitize their hands more often.

- Keep physical distance from other students.
- Wear a mask, if required.
- Avoid sharing objects with other students, including water bottles, devices, writing instruments and books.
- Use hand sanitizer (that contains at least 60% alcohol). Make sure children are using a safe product. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [recalled products](#) that contain toxic methanol. Children should monitor how they feel and tell an adult if they are not feeling well.

- If your child is asked to wear a mask at school, be sure to talk about mask-wearing practices. In addition:

- Choose masks that fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face, completely cover the nose and mouth, are secured with ties or ear loops, include multiple layers of fabric, allow for breathing without restriction, and can be washed and machine dried without damage or change to shape.
- Label your child's masks clearly in a permanent marker so that they are not confused with those of other children.
- Practice with your child putting on and taking off masks without touching the part that covers the face.

Monitoring Your Child for Symptoms

Each morning, you or another trusted adult should screen your child or children for symptoms of COVID-19 before sending them to school. Be sure to:

- Check in with your child each morning for [signs of illness](#). If your child has a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher, they should not go to school.

- Make sure your child does not have a sore throat or other signs of illness, like a cough, diarrhea, severe headache, vomiting or body aches.
- Identify your school point person(s) to contact if your child gets sick.
- If your child has had close contact to a COVID-19 case, they should not go to school. Follow guidance on what to do when [someone has known exposure](#).
- Be familiar with [local COVID-19 testing sites](#) in the event you or your child develop symptoms. These may include sites with free testing available.

Be sure to adhere to any reporting protocol set forth by the school should your child or children develop symptoms or test positive for COVID-19.

Summary

Planning for a child's return to in-person school can be stressful. However, being prepared can help lessen your stress and can empower your child to do their part to stay safe while at school.

For more information, click [here](#).

Source: CDC