

is it safe to send kids back to school?

can kids go to school during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic?

Some schools are planning to reopen for in-person learning this fall. But parents and caregivers are wondering whether it's safe to send their kids to school during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Parents have many things to consider — their needs around work, education, and childcare; the benefits of in-school learning; and their family's health and safety. Younger children and kids with special needs learn best in school. Middle school and high school students might be better able to handle distance learning.

Here are some things to think about.

what do health experts say?

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and other health groups say that getting kids back in school is best for their physical, mental, social, and emotional health. It's also how kids learn best.

Health experts, school officials, and teachers are all working hard to decide whether to reopen school buildings for in-person learning. To help prevent the spread of coronavirus, schools may limit class sizes, stagger schedules, or offer online learning. Some schools may offer a mix of online and in-person learning. Those schools that have in-person learning may require kids and teachers to wear masks, maintain social distancing, and take other precautions.

To find out if cases in your area are increasing, decreasing, or staying the same, call your local health department or look on their website. You also can check your local newspaper. Many news outlets regularly report this information by area or zip code.

is my child likely to get sick with COVID-19 in school?

Kids are less likely to catch and spread the coronavirus than adults. Health experts say that going to school with safeguards in place helps protect students and lowers their chances of getting the virus. These include:

- washing hands and cleaning surfaces often
- wearing masks or cloth face coverings
- keeping kids spaced apart
- staggered schedules
- grouping the same students and teachers together throughout the school day

If healthy kids do get coronavirus, they are less likely than adults to have symptoms or to get very sick. And, while worrisome to parents, the inflammatory disorder called multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C) that some kids get after having coronavirus is rare.

what if my child or family member is in a high-risk group?

Some people are more likely to get very sick from coronavirus. This includes people with health problems, such as asthma, diabetes, or a weak immune system, and adults age 65 or older. Babies younger than 12 months old might get sicker from coronavirus than older kids.

(continued on reverse)



what if my child or family member is in a high-risk group? (continued)

If your child has a health problem or lives with someone in a high-risk group, weigh the risk of your child bringing germs home from the classroom. Many families with high-risk members may opt for distance learning. Your doctor can help you decide.

is my child's school following all COVID-19 safety measures?

Find out what safety precautions your child's school is taking. Ask about:

- **Cleaning and disinfecting.** Schools should follow advice from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for cleaning and disinfecting common areas. Surfaces that get touched a lot (such as bathroom handles and knobs, keyboards, and doorknobs) should be cleaned as often as possible but at least daily.
- **Health screenings and monitoring.** Schools may check kids for symptoms of coronavirus each day. This can include temperature checks and symptom surveys at home or in school. If someone gets sick, there should be a process for isolating them, reporting exposures, and returning to school. Students, teachers, or school staff should stay home if they are sick. Kids should not go to school if they have had close contact with someone with COVID-19.
- **Face coverings.** All adults should wear masks or cloth face coverings, as should middle school and high school students. Preschoolers and elementary school-age kids — if they can keep from touching their faces a lot — also should wear masks.
- **Hand washing.** Students and staff should wash their hands with soap and water well and often. They also can use hand sanitizer if water is not available.
- **Social distancing (also called physical distancing).** Adults and students should stay 6 feet apart whenever possible. In the classroom, spacing desks 3–6 feet apart and having students wear cloth face coverings will help prevent the spread of coronavirus.
- **Class or group size.** Some schools may limit class sizes, place students in cohorts, stagger schedules, or do a hybrid of online and in-person learning. A cohort is a group of students and teachers who stay together throughout the school day. Check with your school to find out their specific plans.
- **Other ways to lower risk.** Schools across the country are figuring out creative ways to reduce the spread of germs. They might:
 - Hold classes and activities outside as much as possible.
 - Have teachers change rooms rather than kids.
 - Have meals in the classroom instead of the cafeteria.
 - Mark floors to show students where to stand and walk.
 - Have students ride the bus in assigned seats that are distanced apart.

Schools that follow these practices can lower the chances of COVID-19 spreading among students and staff. But that doesn't mean infections can't still happen. In case of an outbreak, schools should have a plan ready that includes full-time distance learning at home.

what else should I know?

The coronavirus pandemic continues to change, so it's important to be flexible. Follow your school's decisions and be ready to make adjustments.

Knowing what to expect and how to keep your child safe will help you lower your family's risk of coronavirus. You can find more information on how to return to school safely on the CDC's website.



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