



Staying Safe in School During COVID-19

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, students had their world turned upside down. Schools closed their doors as the virus spread quickly through communities. Since then, we have learned a lot.

One of the biggest lessons: students learn best in-person, and many are also exposed to vital relationships, resources, and other experiences they need to thrive at school.



This school year, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is urging families to make [attendance \(/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/school/Pages/School-Arrival-Truancy-Chronic-Absenteeism.aspx\)](#) a priority for their child.

A recent federal study found that for all students, reading and math scores are lower this year than they were in 2020. Scores were worst among students who were struggling before COVID. Daily attendance can make a big impact on long-term success and good health.

Read on for ways to keep your child or teen healthy and in school.

Vaccines & boosters

The AAP recommends COVID vaccination for everyone 6 months of age and older. Kids who are fully vaccinated are at a much lower risk of missing school due to being ill with COVID-19. Fully vaccinated kids don't have to spend more time away from learning, friendships, sports and other activities.

Remember that fully vaccinated people can still become infected and spread the virus to others, but less than if they were not vaccinated. If your child or teen has recovered from COVID illness, they should still get the vaccine to reduce the risk of getting sick again.

Your child or teen should be up-to-date on all recommended vaccines, including flu, HPV, meningococcal, measles and other vaccines. Routine childhood and adolescent immunizations ([/English/safety-prevention/immunizations/Pages/Recommended-Immunization-Schedules.aspx](#)) can be given with COVID-19 vaccines or in the days before and after. Getting caught up will avoid outbreaks of other illnesses that could keep your kids home from school. See [Back to School: How to Help Your Child Have a Healthy Year \(/English/ages-stages/teen/school/Pages/back-to-school-tips-to-help-kids-have-a-healthy-year.aspx\)](#) for more information.

Masks, testing & staying home when sick

Masks are still a good idea. Although not required in many school districts, indoor masking is still beneficial. Masks help stop the spread of COVID—and other infections like the common cold or the flu ([/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/How-is-the-Flu-Different-From-COVID-19.aspx](#)). It is especially important to use well-fitting masks if your child is ineligible for the vaccine for medical reasons; immunocompromised; if a family member is at high risk; or there is a high rate of COVID (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>) in your community. Masks can help protect kids with immune compromise or disabilities from getting COVID, so they won't have to miss school.

Children with medical conditions can wear face masks with practice, support and role-modeling by adults. Ask your pediatrician if:

- you need help choosing a mask (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/types-of-masks.html#children>) or personal protective equipment that offers the best fit and comfort based on a child's medical or developmental needs or
- you have concerns that a mask cannot be worn (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html#masking>) and want to explore all options.

Planning for outbreaks. Right now, COVID variants and other viruses are circulating. Schools need to plan for outbreaks that may occur. People who have symptoms or are at high risk should be tested, following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>). And if you get a negative result on an at-home COVID-19 antigen test, the Food and Drug Administration advises (<https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/safety-communications/home-covid-19-antigen-tests-take-steps-reduce-your-risk-false-negative-fda-safety-communication>) repeat testing. This is because tests can sometimes show false-negative results.

COVID symptoms & what to do:

- ✓ If a child has COVID symptoms at school (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>), they should be picked up right away so they can isolate.
- ✓ Keep your child home from school when they have symptoms so that others are not exposed (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/if-you-were-exposed.html>).
- ✓ Follow the CDC isolation and precautions (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/isolation.html>) for details on when to get tested, how long to wear a mask and when to end isolation.
- ✓ If your child had COVID within the past 90 days, follow the specific testing recommendations from the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/testing.html#choosing-a-test>).

School-based support for students

Many families will be recovering from the impacts of the pandemic for years to come. Here are some of the supports that families can access through school.

- Resources for families affected by housing or food insecurity
- Access to high-speed internet and devices to complete schoolwork
- Support, testing and necessary accommodations for students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) (/English/health-issues/conditions/developmental-disabilities/Pages/Individualized-Education-Program.aspx) or chronic, high-risk medical conditions (/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/COVID-19-Information-for-Families-of-Children-and-Youth-with-Special-Health-Care-Needs.aspx)
- Emotional and behavioral support and resources for students with anxiety (/English/family-life/family-dynamics/Pages/help-your-child-manage-fears-and-anxieties.aspx), distress, suicidal (/English/health-issues/conditions/emotional-problems/Pages/Ten-Things-Parents-Can-Do-to-Prevent-Suicide.aspx) thoughts and other needs

If your child needs support, do not hesitate to talk with your pediatrician and school staff (including school nurses). They are there to help you explore options and connect your family with support and resources.

More information

- Back to School: Tips to Help Kids Have a Healthy Year (/English/ages-stages/teen/school/Pages/back-to-school-tips-to-help-kids-have-a-healthy-year.aspx)
- COVID-19 Guidance for Safe Schools and Promotion of In-Person Learning (AAP.org) (<https://www.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>)

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