



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
CDC 24/7: Saving Lives, Protecting People™

# Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)



## Help Stop the Spread of COVID-19 in Children

Ways to Protect Children from getting and spreading COVID-19

Updated Sept. 17, 2020 [Print](#)

### Wash hands

Make sure your child [washes their hands](#) often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. [Read more](#) and [watch a video](#) on how to wash hands correctly.

If soap and water are not readily available, make sure your child uses a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Teach your child to cover all surfaces of their hands with hand sanitizer and rub their hands together until they feel dry. If your child is under 6 years of age, supervise them when they use hand sanitizer.

You, as a parent, guardian, or caretaker, play an important role in teaching your child to wash their hands.

- Explain that handwashing can keep them healthy and stop germs from spreading to others.
- Be a good role model — if you wash your hands [as recommended](#), they're more likely to do the same.
- Make [handwashing a family activity](#).

Practice cough and sneeze etiquette by covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing or coughing, throwing the tissue in the closest garbage can, and washing your hands after you throw it away.

### Avoid close contact

Keep your child at least 6 feet away from others who don't live with them and those who are sick (such as coughing and sneezing).

## Limit in-person playtime and connect virtually with other children

CDC recognizes this pandemic has been stressful to many. Socializing and interacting with peers can be a healthy way for children to cope with stress and connect with others. However, the key to slowing the spread of COVID-19 is to limit close contact with others as much as possible.

An important guiding principle to remember is that **the more people your child interacts with, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread**. While your child may be spending time with other people as they return to childcare or school settings, you should limit your child's interactions with additional children and adults outside of childcare or school to decrease risk.

For playdates, the risk of COVID-19 increases as follows:

- **Lowest risk:** No in-person playdates. Children connect virtually (via phone calls and video chats).
- **Medium risk:** Infrequent playdates with the same family or friend who is also [practicing everyday preventive measures](#). Children maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from each other during the playdate. Playdates are held outdoors. (Indoor spaces are more risky than outdoor space where there is less ventilation and it might be harder to keep children apart.)
- **Highest Risk:** Frequent indoor playdates with multiple friends or families who are not [practicing everyday preventive measures](#). Children do not maintain a distance of 6 feet from each other.

To help your child maintain social connections while social distancing, help them have supervised phone calls or video chats with their friends.

## Limit your child's interaction with people at highest risk of severe illness from COVID-19

To protect those who are at [increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19](#), you may consider taking these extra precautions.

- Separate your child from others in your household who have an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- Carefully consider who might be best to provide childcare if you are unable to care for your child (for example, you are not able to stay with your child while childcare or school is closed).
- Limit your child's contact with other people if someone at higher risk for COVID-19 will be providing care (such as an [older adult](#) or someone with [an underlying medical condition](#)).
- Postpone visits or trips to see grandparents, older family members and family members who are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Consider connecting virtually or by writing letters.

# Wear a mask

## Children 2 years of age and older should wear a mask.

Help your child (if 2 years of age or older) [wear a mask correctly](#) when in public and when around people they don't live with.

CDC recognizes that wearing masks may not be possible in every situation or for some people. Correct and consistent use of masks may be challenging for some children, such as children with certain disabilities, including cognitive, intellectual, developmental, sensory and behavioral disorders. [Learn more](#) about what you can do if your child or you cannot wear masks in certain situations.

Note that wearing a mask is **not** a substitute for other everyday prevention actions, like avoiding close contact with others and washing hands frequently.

# Clean & disinfect

## Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily

Frequently touched surfaces include tables, doorknobs, light switches, remotes, handles, desks, toilets, and sinks.

- Clean with detergent or soap and water.
- Then disinfect with [EPA-registered household disinfectants](#) [↗](#).

## Wash items, including washable plush toys as needed

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely.
- You can wash dirty laundry from a sick person together with other people's items.

Learn more about [cleaning and disinfecting your home](#).

# Consider changing travel plans

Because travel increases your child's chances of coming in contact with others who may have COVID-19 and your child spreading the virus that causes COVID-19 to others if they are infected, **staying home is the best way to protect your child and others from getting sick.**

We don't know if one type of travel is safer than others. Any place where travelers interact with other people (for example, airports, bus stations, train stations, gas stations, restaurants, and rest stops) are places travelers can be exposed to the virus in the air and on surfaces. It can also be hard to stay at least 6 feet apart from other people during travel. Learn more about [Travel During COVID-19](#).

Last Updated Sept. 17, 2020

Content source: [National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases \(NCIRD\)](#), Division of Viral Diseases