

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Children

How do I talk to my child about COVID-19?

As public conversations around (COVID-19) increase, children may worry about themselves, their family, and friends getting ill with COVID-19. Parents, family members, school staff, and other trusted adults can play an important role in helping children make sense of what they hear in a way that is honest, accurate, and minimizes anxiety or fear. [CDC has created guidance to help adults have conversations with children](#) about COVID-19 and ways they can avoid getting and spreading the disease.

What guidance has the California Department of Education (CDE) issued in response to COVID-19?

The CDE is following the guidance issued by the California Department of Public Health. For more information, read the [guidance here](#).

How can I help my child continue learning?

- Stay in touch with your child's school.
 - Many schools are offering lessons online (virtual learning). Review assignments from the school, and help your child establish a reasonable pace for completing the work. You may need to assist your child with turning on devices, reading instructions, and typing answers.
- Create a schedule and routine for learning at home, but remain flexible.
- Consider the needs and adjustment required for your child's age group.
 - The transition to being at home will be different for preschoolers, K-5, middle school students, and high school students. Talk to your child about expectations and how they are adjusting to being at home versus at school.
- Look for ways to make learning fun.

For more information, see [Help Children Learn at Home](#).

Will kids have access to school meals?

Check with your school on plans to continue meal services during the school dismissal. Many schools are keeping school facilities open to allow families to pick up meals or are providing grab-and-go meals at a central location.

How can I keep my children healthy?

- **Watch your child for any signs of illness.**
- **Watch for signs of stress in your child.**
- **Teach and reinforce [everyday preventive actions](#).**
- **Help your child stay active.**
- **Help your child stay socially connected.**

For more information, see [Keep Children Healthy during the COVID-19 Outbreak](#).

[Limit time with older adults, including relatives, and people with chronic medical conditions.](#)

[Older adults and people who have serious underlying medical conditions](#) are at highest risk of getting sick from COVID-19.

- If others in your home are at [higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19](#), consider extra precautions to separate your child from those people.
- If you are unable to stay home with your child during school dismissals and someone at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 will be providing care (older adult or someone with a serious underlying medical condition), limit your children's contact with other people.
- Consider postponing visits or trip to see older family members and grandparents. Connect virtually or by writing letters and sending via mail.

[Is my child with an underlying medical condition at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19?](#)

It's not known yet whether all children with underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Although most COVID-19 cases in children are not severe, serious illness that needs to be treated at the hospital still happens. Some data on children reported that the majority who needed hospitalization for COVID-19 had at least one underlying medical condition. The most common underlying conditions reported among children with COVID-19 include chronic lung disease (including asthma), heart disease, and conditions that weaken the immune system. This information suggests that children with these underlying medical conditions may be at risk for more severe illness from COVID-19.

More data are needed to learn which underlying or complex medical conditions may put children at increased risk. CDC is monitoring new information as it becomes available and will provide updates as needed.

Learn more about caring for [children with special health care needs during a disaster](#) and [people who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19](#).

What additional steps should families that have a child with an underlying medical condition take?

In addition to following the recommendations to [prevent getting sick](#) and [running essential errands](#), families should take extra steps recommended for persons with [higher risk of severe COVID-19 illness](#) and steps outlined for those with [potential COVID-19 exposure or confirmed illness](#).

- Identify potential alternative caregivers, if you or other regular caregivers become sick and are unable to care for your child. If possible, these alternative caregivers would not be at [higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19](#) themselves.
- Try to have at least one month of medication and medical supplies on hand. Some health plans allow for a 90-day supply of prescription medications. Consider discussing this option with your child's healthcare provider.
- Review any care plans for your child, such as an asthma action plan, and make sure caregivers and backup caregivers are familiar with these plans.
- If you do not have [care plans or an emergency notebook](#), try to make them. They typically include important information about your child's medical conditions, how to manage those conditions, how to get in touch with your child's doctors, allergies, information on medications (names, dosages, and administration instructions), preferences (food and other) or special needs, daily routines and activities, friends, and details about routines that are important to support behavioral and emotional health.
- Learn if your child's healthcare providers, including doctors and therapists, have new ways to be contacted or new ways of providing appointments. If they offer telemedicine visits, find out how those are arranged and any additional information you need.
- If your child receives any support care services in the home that need to be continued, make plans for what you will do if those direct care providers get sick, or if persons in your household are sick.
- Discuss with the support care agencies and the providers ways to minimize risk for exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19.
 - If your child or other persons in your household are sick with COVID-19 and are able to recover at home, inform your direct care providers and consider postponing or rescheduling services until the criteria for [discontinuing home isolation](#) have been met.
 - Ask service providers if they are experiencing any [symptoms of COVID-19](#), or if they have been in contact with someone who has COVID-19.
 - Tell the service provider to:

- Wear a [cloth face covering](#) if they will be close (less than 6 feet) to you or persons in your household. Their cloth face covering helps protect you if they are infected but do not have symptoms.
- Ask them to wash their hands with soap and water or, if unavailable, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol when they enter your home, before and after helping your child (dressing, bathing/showering, transferring, toileting and/or diapering, feeding), after handling tissues, and after changing linens or doing laundry. [Learn more about proper handwashing](#).
- Service providers and families should:
 - Routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces (counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, bedside tables), and equipment such as wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, oxygen tanks and tubing, communication boards, and other assistive devices. Refer to CDC's recommendations for [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home](#).

What can I do if my child has difficulties adjusting to new routines and following recommendations?

Helping children understand and follow recommendations, like social distancing and [wearing cloth face coverings](#), can be challenging if your child has intellectual disabilities, sensory issues, or other special healthcare needs.

- Keeping children at home can lower stress created by social distancing and cloth face covering recommendations. Reach out to others for help in running essential errands.
- Behavioral techniques can be used to address behavioral challenges and to develop new routines. These include social stories, video modeling, picture schedules, and visual cues. Try rewarding your child in small ways with his or her favorite non-food treat or activities to help switch routines and to follow recommendations.
- Many of the organizations you turn to for information and support around your child's complex, chronic medical condition may have information on their websites to help families address issues related to COVID-19.
- Your child's therapist(s) and teachers may also have resources to help successfully introduce new routines to your child.
- While learning at home, continue special education services, accommodations, or services received in school through your child's 504 plan or Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), as much as possible. Many schools are continuing interventions like speech therapy, small group classes, extended time and more. Learn more about [supporting children with distance learning](#).

Additional information on [caring for children](#) and on [child development specific conditions](#) are available.

How can my family cope with the added stress?

Supporting children with special healthcare needs can put additional demands and stress on families, especially during emergency situations. You have likely found ways to manage the stress and challenges unique to your family's situation. It is important to continue your family's coping methods, including reaching out to other family members, friends, support groups, and organizations that have been helpful in the past.

See information on [helping children cope](#) and coping with stress (such as [visiting parks, trails, or open spaces](#)) and [making your family stronger](#).

If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others:

- Call 911
- Visit the [Disaster Distress Helplineexternal icon](#), call 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746
- Visit the [National Domestic Violence Hotlineexternal icon](#) or call 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224

What if my child or someone else in the home is sick with symptoms of COVID-19?

If your child with special healthcare needs becomes sick with [symptoms of COVID-19](#), contact your child's healthcare provider. If your child has new or worsening [emergency warning signs](#), such as trouble breathing, pain or pressure in the chest, confusion or inability to wake them up, or bluish lips or face, call 911. If you think your child may have COVID-19, notify the operator so that first responders may be appropriately prepared to protect themselves and others.

Notify your child's healthcare provider if someone else in your house becomes sick with COVID-19, so they can provide any advice specific for your child.

See additional information if [someone in the home is sick with COVID-19](#) or suspected of having COVID-19.

What if my child's symptoms of their underlying medical condition or complex, chronic medical condition get worse?

- Call your child's healthcare provider if you have any concerns about your child's medical conditions. If you need emergency help, call 911.
- Emergency departments have infection prevention plans to protect you and your child from getting COVID-19 if your child needs care for medical conditions not

related to COVID-19. Do not delay getting emergency care for your child's underlying condition or complex medical condition because you are afraid of getting exposed to COVID-19 when visiting the healthcare setting.

What if my child needs to go to the hospital?

If your child's healthcare provider tells you to go to the hospital for any health problem, including COVID-19

- Ask the healthcare provider to let the hospital know you are coming and to share important information about caring for your child.
- Visiting policies may have changed due to COVID-19. If your child's hospital policy does not allow an adult to stay with a child, ask your child's healthcare provider for a statement explaining your child's need for a familiar adult to be present.
- Bring your care plans/emergency notebook with you along with paper and pen to write down questions you have during your time at the hospital.

What is the risk of my child becoming sick with COVID-19?

Based on available evidence, children do not appear to be at higher risk for COVID-19 than adults. While some children and infants have been sick with COVID-19, adults make up most of the known cases to date. However, a few children have developed [multisystem inflammatory syndrome \(MIS-C\)](#). Currently, information about this syndrome is limited. CDC is working with state and local health departments to learn more about MIS-C.

How can I protect my child from COVID-19 infection?

You can encourage your child to help stop the spread of COVID-19 by teaching them to do the same things everyone should do to stay healthy.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue and throw the tissue in the trash.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, like tables, countertops, light switches, doorknobs, and cabinet handles).

You can find additional information on preventing COVID-19 at [How to Protect Yourself & Others](#). Additional information on how COVID-19 is spread is available at [How COVID-19 Spreads](#).

More information on [Keeping Children Healthy during the COVID-19 Outbreak](#) is available online.

Are the symptoms of COVID-19 different in children than in adults?

No. The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar in children and adults. COVID-19 can look different in different people. For many people, being sick with COVID-19 would be a little bit like having the flu. People can get a fever, cough, or have a hard time taking deep breaths. Most people who have gotten COVID-19 have not gotten very sick. Only a small group of people who get it have had more serious problems.

CDC and partners are investigating cases of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) associated with COVID-19. Learn more about [COVID-19 and multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children \(MIS-C\)](#).

Should children wear face coverings?

CDC recommends that everyone 2 years and older wear a cloth face covering that covers their nose and mouth in public settings when around people not living in your household, particularly where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. Cloth face coverings should NOT be put on babies or children younger than 2 because of the danger of suffocation. Children younger than 2 years of age are listed as an exception as well as anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance.

Can my child hang out with their friends?

The key to slowing the spread of COVID-19 is to practice social distancing. While school is out, children should not have in-person playdates with children from other households. If children are playing outside their own homes, it is essential that they remain 6 feet from anyone who is not in their own household. Some children with certain underlying [medical conditions](#) are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Make sure children practice [everyday preventive behaviors](#), such as washing their hands often with soap and water. Remember, if children meet outside of school in groups, it can put everyone at risk.

For more information, see [Help Stop the Spread of COVID-19 in Children](#).