



COVID-19 UPDATE

FAQs: Returning to School During the COVID-19 Pandemic

We understand there are many unknowns during this pandemic, especially about students returning to school. Use the following Frequently Asked Questions to help guide your conversations with families.

Please keep in mind the following:

- Each school district will make the final decisions regarding how, when and in what capacity students will return to their schools, either in-person, online or a combination.
- These recommendations are based on guidelines from the [CDC](#), [AAP](#), [Ohio Governor's Guidelines for School Re-entry](#) and [Big 8 Plus Health and Safety Coalition of Ohio](#), a group of school nursing leaders from Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown City Schools.
- These recommendations are intended to minimize the risk of spreading COVID-19 but cannot eliminate the risk of exposure. This means that it's still possible for a student or school employee to test positive for COVID-19 at some point.
- Physical distancing, hand hygiene and face coverings remain the top priority to protect students and staff members, and they are essential to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in schools.

1. Will there be physical distancing at school?

- a) Maintaining physical distancing of 6 feet is ideal and highly recommended.
- b) Physical distancing should be in place in classrooms, hallways, lunchrooms, restrooms, office areas, playgrounds, gymnasiums and auditoriums.

2. Who should wear a mask and when? Are there any alternatives?

- a. Although school districts may decide to not require students to wear face coverings, students who can, should wear them.
- b. Young children who are less likely to tolerate face coverings and frequently touch their faces (Pre-K) should not wear face coverings as the potential harm would likely outweigh any benefits. Additional safety measures (see FAQ 4) should be considered.
- c. Elementary students should wear face coverings when harm (frequent face touching) does not outweigh the benefit, and additional safety measures (see FAQ 4) should be considered).
- d. Middle and high school students should wear face coverings as long as benefits outweigh any potential harm.
- e. Adults should always wear face coverings unless alone in a room/office.
- f. Children under 2 years, those with sensory issues and anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance should not wear cloth face coverings.
- g. Face shields can be considered as an alternative to masks particularly for staff instructing students who are deaf, hearing impaired, in speech therapy sessions and/or are ESL students.
- h. Watch the Face Mask Etiquette video below for instructions on safely wearing a mask.

3. Should hand hygiene be performed more often?

- a. Hands should be washed:
 - Upon entering a classroom
 - Before eating
 - Before boarding the bus at the end of the day
 - After restroom use
 - Anytime hands are dirty

- Before putting on and after removing a face covering
 - First thing when entering the home after school
- b. Hand sanitizer should be accessible, but hand washing – for 20 seconds – should be performed after 2 uses of hand sanitizer.
- 4. Are there additional protective measures that can be considered?**
- a. Group classes and minimize room changes to reduce the amount of exposure to adults and children.
 - b. Use outdoor spaces as much as possible.
 - c. Minimize shared storage spaces such as lockers and cubbies.
 - d. Provide separation (physically or by means of partitions) between sick and well students in the school clinic.
- 5. Should staff or students wear gloves?**
- a. No. Unless they are normally worn for other purposes, such as when cleaning surfaces.
 - b. Handwashing has been shown to be more important than gloves in preventing transmission.
- 6. How important is temperature taking? Should we expect screening of temperatures at school?**
- a. It is always important to monitor a child for fever as a sign of illness before sending a child to school. If a child has a fever over 100°F, contact a health care provider and keep the child home from school.
 - b. Schools will decide on temperature screening at entrances. It is not recommended due to long wait times to enter school with minimal benefits in identifying COVID-positive students. Long wait times may lead to less classroom time.
 - c. Schools will monitor students for signs and symptoms of illness at school as they have in the past. If a student becomes sick at school, their temperature will be taken. Most school policies require student dismissal for fever over 100°F.
- 7. When should I keep my child home from school?**
- a. Every parent should know and check their child for possible symptoms of COVID-19. Keep children home from school and contact a health care provider if they have any of the following:
 - Fever or chills
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing
 - Fatigue/tiredness
 - Muscle/body aches
 - Headache
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Sore throat
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- 8. What if a child or staff member at a school is diagnosed with COVID-19?**
- a. Cases of COVID-19 must be reported to local health departments, and contact tracing is the best way to identify those put at risk. Interviews will determine who has been in contact with an infected person and their level of risk. Depending on the details, recommendations may be made for further care, testing, isolation and quarantine. Schools will work in partnership with their local health department to determine the need for school closure(s) or other actions.
- 9. If a child has symptoms of COVID-19, do they and their families require quarantine?**
- a. If a child is sent home from school due to concerning symptoms, the best option is to test the child for COVID-19. Contact your medical provider for advice.
 - b. A negative test result will allow the child to return to school when appropriate based on their symptoms.
 - c. Having symptoms of COVID-19 without testing OR having a positive test result requires isolation for 10 days after the first day symptoms appear and improvement of symptoms, AND going at least 3 days without a fever, whichever is longer. If a child is without symptoms but tests positive, the 10 day period begins with the date of the test.



10. Are there kids who should not attend school? What about healthy kids who live with high-risk family members or caretakers?

- a. All students are entitled to a public education, whether that is in-person instruction or through a virtual classroom. Decisions regarding students returning to school are ultimately up to parents. If your school is providing adequate safety measures, then the risk of virus spread will be low, though never guaranteed.
- b. Some procedures (i.e. suctioning) are deemed high-risk aerosol generating and place caregivers at risk. Therefore, these tasks should only be performed at a safe distance from others and while wearing all necessary protective equipment.
- c. Many medications are administered at school and must be given in the school's clinic. Because schools may struggle with having space to isolate sick students with symptoms, each time a student goes to the clinic to receive medication, they are at increased risk of exposure. Consider whether medication administration at school can safely be reduced.

11. Do we need to worry about this since kids don't get sick from COVID-19?

- a. Children can still get sick from this coronavirus. Although they make up fewer cases than adults, children are not immune.
- b. Children are also often asymptomatic carriers and can unknowingly spread COVID-19 to high-risk family or community members.

12. How should we support children and adolescents with signs of anxiety/stress during this time?

- a. Talk to children openly about their feelings and how COVID-19 is impacting their lives.
- b. Encourage parents and patients to seek mental health services at school or through Akron Children's if a child expresses anxiety or symptoms of depression to ensure adequate support during these stressful times.
- c. Pay extra attention to children with prior diagnoses of anxiety, depression or other mental health diagnoses.

13. What are some before school/after school routines to prevent the spread of germs?

- a. Practice regular handwashing – before and after school. Students should be taught the proper techniques for handwashing and how to use hand sanitizer.

14. What happens if my child gets to school and learns he/she has a fever?

- a. Students who display symptoms should be separated from any well child in the clinic, either in a separate, supervised room or by a partition. Parents should be notified with instructions to have their child picked up as soon as possible to prevent exposure of other students/staff.

15. If I'm worried about my child getting COVID-19, will my school have an online-only option?

- a. This will depend on your school district, but most are offering an online alternative.

Watch these Akron Children's School Health videos:

- Face Mask Etiquette <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1K9Zs16dhRE>
- Hand Sanitizer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YylsSJxHJdQ>
- Social Distancing: What is 6 feet? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OesXL3l6M4s>
- Cross Contamination and Gloves <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SGvVNFw1Egs>

Find more COVID-19 resources at akronchildrens.org/coronavirus.



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