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COVID-19 IN CHILDREN AND TEENS

This article is for parents and caregivers who are concerned about COVID-19 in their children and teens. It compiles expert guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and provides helpful links that may be of use to caregivers.

CHILDREN AND TEENS CAN GET COVID-19

While fewer children have been sick with COVID-19 compared to adults, children can be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, get sick from COVID-19 and spread the virus that causes COVID-19 to others. Like adults, children who have COVID-19, but have no symptoms (asymptomatic), can still spread the virus to others.

Most children with COVID-19 have mild symptoms or have no symptoms at all. However, some children can get severely ill from COVID-19. They might require hospitalization, intensive care or a ventilator to help them breathe. In rare cases, they might die.

The CDC and its partners are investigating a rare but serious medical condition associated with COVID-19 in children called [Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children](#) (MIS-C). They do not yet know what causes MIS-C and who is at increased risk for developing it.

SOME CHILDREN ARE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE

Babies under 1 year old might be more likely to have severe illness from COVID-19. Other children, regardless of age, with the following [underlying medical conditions](#) might also be at increased risk of severe illness

compared to other children:

- Asthma or chronic lung disease
- Diabetes
- Genetic, neurologic or metabolic conditions
- Sickle cell disease
- Heart disease since birth
- Immunosuppression (weakened immune system due to certain medical conditions or being on medications that weaken the immune system)
- Medical complexity (children with multiple chronic conditions that affect many parts of the body, or are dependent on technology and other significant supports for daily life)
- Obesity

This list does not include every underlying condition that might increase the risk for severe illness in children. As more information becomes available, the CDC will continue to update and share information about the risk of severe illness among children.

If your child has an underlying condition, make sure to discuss your child's potential for getting very sick with their health care provider.



MONITORING YOUR CHILD FOR COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of COVID-19 are similar in adults and children and can look like symptoms of other common illnesses, such as colds, strep throat or allergies. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 in children are fever and cough, but children may have any of these signs or symptoms of COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Nasal congestion or runny nose
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Diarrhea
- Nausea or vomiting
- Stomachache
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle or body aches
- Poor appetite or poor feeding, especially in babies under 1 year old

Caregivers should pay particular attention to:

- Fever (a temperature of 100.4 F or higher)
- Sore throat
- New uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing (for a child with chronic allergic/asthmatic cough, see if there is a change from their usual cough)
- Diarrhea, vomiting or stomachache
- New onset of severe headache, especially with a fever

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD BECOMES SICK

If your child has COVID-19 symptoms, do the following:

- Keep your child home.
- Consider whether your child needs to see a health care provider and be tested for COVID-19. The CDC recommends all people with symptoms of COVID-19, including children, get tested. The CDC has a [Coronavirus Self Checker](#) available in its website, which can help with this decision-making.

- Protect yourself from COVID-19 while caring for your sick child by wearing a mask, washing your hands frequently, monitoring yourself for symptoms of COVID-19 and using other preventive measures.
- Notify your child's school that your child is sick. Also inform the school if your child has had a COVID-19 test and what the result is, if available.
- Review your child's school (or other child care facility) policies related to when a child who has been sick can return.
- Bring your child back to school or other in-person activities only after they can [safely be around others](#).

WHAT TO DO IF YOU BECOME SICK

If a child needs to stay in the home with you (the parent or caregiver) while you're sick with COVID-19:

- Both you and the child should wear a mask while in the same room.
- Note that masks should not be placed on:
 - Children younger than 2 years old
 - Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious
 - Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol and rub your hands together until they are dry.
- Try to stay 6 feet away from the child, if possible and if safe.
- Increase ventilation by opening a window in a room that you are in.
- Disinfect any items that you need to bring to the child.
- Do not disinfect food that you bring to the child.

- Watch for symptoms, considering the following:
 - During this time caregivers should monitor themselves for symptoms.
 - Check the child's temperature twice a day and watch for symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever, cough or shortness of breath, or symptoms specific to children.*
 - If the child develops symptoms, call the child's healthcare provider for medical advice and follow the steps for caring for someone who is sick.
- If possible, the child should stay away from people who are at [higher-risk](#) for getting very sick from COVID-19.

*COVID-19 symptoms can look different in different people. For many people, being sick with COVID-19 would be similar to 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.

IN AN EMERGENCY, CALL 911 OR SEEK EMERGENCY CARE

Do not delay seeking emergency care for your child because you are worried about the spread of COVID-19. Emergency departments have infection prevention plans to protect you and your child from getting sick with COVID-19 if your child needs emergency care.

If your child is showing any of these emergency warning signs, seek emergency medical care immediately.

- Trouble breathing
- Pain or pressure in the chest that doesn't go away
- New confusion
- Can't wake up or stay awake when not tired
- Pale, gray or blue-colored skin, lips or nail beds (depending on skin tone)

This list does not include all possible symptoms.

Call your child's health care provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM THE CDC

To learn more about how to protect yourself from the virus that causes COVID-19 visit the [how to protect yourself and others](#) webpage.

To learn more about screening for COVID-19 in child care and schools visit the [screening K-12 students for symptoms of COVID-19](#) webpage.

Visit the [back-to-school planning checklist for parents, caregivers and guardians](#) webpage for useful information on planning your child's return to school.