



Guidance for Parents: What to do if your child has COVID-19 or a positive COVID-19 test

The following outlines how to manage illness and protect others from becoming ill.

What to expect

COVID-19 illness typically lasts two weeks for those with mild illness and 3-6 weeks for serious illness. Symptoms can change over time, some days feeling better, then worse before recovery. COVID-related symptoms usually include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

When to seek emergency medical attention

Look for emergency warning signs* for COVID-19. If your child experiences any of the following, seek emergency medical care immediately:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

**This list is not all possible symptoms. Please call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.*

Managing COVID-19 at home

- Keep your child home for the entire isolation period. Most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and can recover at home without medical care. Do not leave your home, except to get medical care. Do not visit public areas.
- Encourage rest and hydration. Take over-the-counter medicines, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen, to help relieve symptoms.
- Completely avoid interaction with others to the extent possible.
- Avoid public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.
- Stay out of sports and other extracurricular activities or attend virtually where possible.



How long is your child contagious?

A person with COVID-19 is able to spread the virus to others **two days before symptoms start through at least 10 days after symptoms start**. Your child is no longer contagious 10 days after your symptoms start, IF you are feeling better AND are without a fever for at least 24 hours without medication.

If at 10 days after getting sick your child does not feel better, he or she needs to stay isolated from others. Talk with your health care provider or public health if you have concerns about illness lasting more than 10 days.

It is not necessary to be tested again after your symptoms start. You may actually test positive after you feel better; however, that does not mean you are able to spread the virus.

What if my child has no symptoms, but his or her test was positive?

The same guidance applies as if symptoms were present. Children are able to spread COVID-19 to others if asymptomatic. Children still must isolate for 10 days following the date your positive test was taken. The same isolation protocols apply as stated above.

How do I avoid spreading illness to others?

Stay in a specific room and away from other people and pets in your home. If possible, assign a separate bathroom for your child. If your child needs to be around other people or animals in or outside of the home, have him or her wear a mask.

- Cover mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Immediately wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid sharing personal household items.
- Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in the home.
- Wash these items thoroughly after using them with soap and water or put in the dishwasher.

When do I need to wear a mask?

A child should wear a mask over your nose and mouth if you must be around other people or animals, including pets (even at home). You don't need to wear the mask if you are alone. If a child can't put on a mask (because of trouble breathing, for example), cover coughs and sneezes in some other way. Try to stay at least 6 feet away from other people. This will help protect the



people around your child. Masks should not be placed on young children under age 2 years, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is not able to remove the mask without help.

How do I keep my home clean?

Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces in your “sick room” and bathroom; wear disposable gloves. Let someone else clean and disinfect surfaces in common areas, but you should clean your bedroom and bathroom, if possible. Be sure to clean high-touch surfaces include phones, remote controls, counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables. Use household cleaners and disinfectants. Clean the area or item with soap and water or another detergent if it is dirty. Then, use a household disinfectant.

Notes about cleaning products:

- Be sure to follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product. Many products recommend keeping the surface wet for several minutes to ensure germs are killed. Many also recommend precautions such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.
- Most EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective.
- [Complete Disinfection Guidance](#)

Resources

CDC – What to do if a student becomes sick

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/student-becomes-sick-diagnosis-flowchart.html>

CDC – What to do if you are sick

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

Isolating while sick

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/isolation.html>

When you can be around others

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-home-isolation.html>