

# COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Parents, Guardians, and Families

This guidance document outlines public health tips and prevention strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and answer questions about how to keep your children safe.

## Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness in people caused by a new virus. It can spread from person to person.

Since this is a new virus, there are still things we do not know, but we are learning more about COVID-19 each day. Minnesota's public health community is working to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our state, and we count on everyone to help.

Avoid assumptions about who you think may be sick. Viruses don't discriminate. Be careful about where you get information about COVID-19. Promises of a "cure" or a guaranteed way to prevent COVID-19 are not accurate. As of now, there is no vaccine for COVID-19, nor guarantee of [immunity](#). Please continue to see the [MDH](#) and [CDC](#) websites for information on how to help prevent COVID-19.

Children are less likely to contract COVID-19, and when they do, become less sick. Parents, caregivers, and families play a critical role in keeping their children healthy and stopping the virus from spreading.

## Symptoms

[Symptoms](#) of COVID-19 can include fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell. Other less common symptoms include gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. These symptoms may appear 2-14 days after you are exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19.

Not everyone with COVID-19 has all of these symptoms, and some people may not have any symptoms. People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 should restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care. Call your health care provider if you need to seek medical care.

## Protect yourself, your family and your community

The best ways to protect yourself from COVID-19 and slow the spread are the same things you do to protect yourself from colds and flu:

- **Wash your hands often** with soap and water. Wash for at least 20 seconds. Always wash after being in public places or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water is not available, use hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol

- **Use a cloth face covering to cover your nose and mouth** when around others. Do not recommend masking for those who cannot reliably wear them, including young children, or those who have trouble breathing. There is more information on masking with children in the FAQ section below. Cloth face coverings can help to stop your germs from infecting others. This is extra important if people without symptoms can spread the virus that causes COVID-19 disease.
- **Stay home when you are sick.**
- **Cover your coughs and sneezes.**
- **Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces**, keep your house and all the people in it extra clean to stay healthy. This can help stop infections from spreading.
- **Monitor your health and be alert for symptoms.** If you need to see a doctor, call your clinic first. Do not just go to the clinic, as they may want to meet you outside or make other preparations for your visit. If you do go to a clinic in person, wear a face covering.

## Slow the Spread

To slow the spread, MDH recommends all people practice social distancing. This can be challenging with small children. Families should try to:

- Stay home as much as possible.
- Stay at least 6 feet from other people if you are in public places.
- Wear a cloth face covering when in public or around others.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- If you are 65 and older or have certain underlying medical conditions, stay at home and avoid situations where you could be exposed, including travel.

## Promoting Health with Children

- Children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day.
- Children and staff should wash hands before and after outdoor activities, including playground time, shopping, etc.
- Teach children about proper handwashing.
- Talk with children about how to stay healthy –avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth and covering their cough.

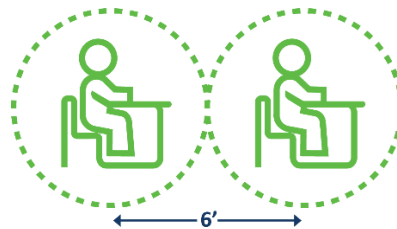
## Family Supports during COVID-19

The Children and Family [Resource guide](#) ([Hmong](#), [Somali](#) and [Spanish](#)) includes information on economic, child care, mental health, and other supports that may be helpful for your family during COVID-19.

# FAQ for Parents and Families

## What is social distancing?

The term “social distancing” refers to measures being taken to restrict where and when people can gather in order to stop or slow the spread of infectious disease. In general, 6 feet of separation is the distance that should be kept between people interacting within their community. This recommendation is important when you and your family are out in public for grocery shopping, playing with friends, any gathering or other activity where there is intermingling of people whose symptom status may be hard to monitor. Social distancing guidance will support a 3-foot radius around each participant, resulting in a 6-foot total distance between any two people.



## What about masks?

Minnesotans are encouraged to wear cloth face coverings during the work day and when in public spaces as much as possible. These alternative face coverings are often homemade and should not be the medical-grade face masks such as surgical facemasks or N95 respirators. Cloth face coverings are used to reduce the likelihood that the wearer will transmit virus to other people.

### Key messages about cloth face coverings

- Create and wear cloth face coverings by following [CDC guidance](#).
- Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth while wearing cloth face coverings to prevent potential contamination.
- Wash your hands thoroughly before putting on the face covering. Remove the face covering carefully and wash your hands thoroughly after removing.
- Wash the face covering after each use.

### Should children wear face coverings?

- MDH recommends that children over two wear a face covering whenever possible.
- In a child care setting, MDH recommends children only wear face coverings when they can reliably wear them without touching them often and taking them on and off (following CDC guidelines). CDC does not recommend that children under the age 2 wear face coverings.

### What kind of face coverings should our family wear and when?

- Whenever a family is in public or around other families or groups, all family members

(including those children who can reliably wear a face covering) are encouraged to wear them.

- If outdoors and effectively and consistently maintaining social distancing, then can consider not using them for certain activities.
- Face coverings are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult.

### **Can shields be worn instead of face coverings?**

- Face shields will not prevent the wearer from spreading COVID-19 to others. They do not offer the same type of protection as face coverings. They are intended to protect the wearer from splashes of bodily fluids.

### **Is it safe to send my child to school, child care, or youth program?**

Many child care, youth programs, and socially distanced summer school programs are open and operating; those open are required to adhere to specific [public health guidance](#) to keep children and families safe. Routine and socialization are important for children and we also know these settings provide a critical service in allowing parents and guardians to work so they can support their families.

Youth and child care providers and programs are encouraged to communicate with families prior to programming and keep in touch. The strategies they undertake should be adaptable as the level of community transmission increases to the point where programming must be disrupted. Families should be prepared:

- For a screening process when they drop their child off
- For children to not be allowed to attend and to isolate if they arrives with any symptoms based on MDH and CDC exclusion guidance ([COVID-19 Exclusion Guidance](#))
- Pick up and quarantine your child if they become symptomatic or are exposed to COVID-19 while participating in programming.

When considering whether to send your child to in-person activities such as child care, youth programs, in-person education, or other activities, consider the risk factors and whether anyone in your family has an underlying condition. For specific guidance on youth sports, visit [the MDH webpage on youth sports](#).

The Administration is in regular communication with child care settings and youth programs to share updates on public health guidance to prioritize safety. Specific guidance has been developed to support these programs in keeping your children and families safe, as well as the staff and communities offering education, enrichment and care to children.

If interested, the public health guidance for schools and child care, can be found here:

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Guidance for Schools and Child Care Programs \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html)
- [CDC Guidance for Child Care Providers that Remain Open \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html)

- [Schools and Child Care: Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/index.html)

### **Can I have a nanny or babysitter?**

As with the general public health guidance, from a virus and transmission perspective, we would recommend limiting intermixing families and groups as much as possible; however, child care is a critical sector and essential for families to live, work, go to school, and support their families. Interacting with any person increases risk of transmission so we recommend that babysitters wear face coverings, you keep surfaces clean before and after someone is in your home, and think about utilizing those nannies and babysitters who are practicing social distancing and limiting interacting in their own lives.

### **If I co-parent with another household, am a blended family, or share custody with my child, is it ok for my child to travel between households? Can my child see their other parent?**

Stability, routine, and connection is critical to a child's development and well-being. While we encourage all families to practice social distancing and limit gatherings, this should not be interpreted as stopping normal family interactions. Current evidence indicates that children are less likely to contract COVID-19, and when they do, they become less sick. To limit transmission potential, families could consider washing clothes between households and cleaning any surfaces carried between households. Also again, it is important to talk to about and encourage them to practice handwashing, covering sneezes and coughs, etc. Families should consider having a plan for alternative care arrangements should a family member get sick and need to quarantine in one home or other plan.

### **What about outdoor environments?**

The Governor has encouraged healthy and safe outdoor activities such as walking, running, and fishing and hunting. Minnesotans can continue to enjoy parks, trails, and other public recreation lands, consistent with any limitations established by the land administrator. We urge people engaging in outdoor activities to:

- Practice social distancing.
- Avoid unnecessary travel.
- Not congregate in groups larger than 10.
- Exercise caution when using public spaces such as picnic tables, benches, drinking fountains, or other sites.
- Follow the [DNR/MDH outdoor recreation guidelines](#).

## What about playgrounds?

Children of all ages need to move their bodies and stay physically active. Getting outside for fresh air and movement is important to support physical and mental health on a daily basis. Like other outdoor activities, going to a public playground is allowed under the Stay Safe Order. Families and guardians should:

- Be careful to ensure children wash hands after touching play structures and maintain six feet of space from other children as much as possible.
- Refer to more detailed guidance from MDH on playgrounds:  
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/playground.pdf>

Although the Governor's order doesn't close playgrounds, they may be closed by local authorities. Local authorities, districts, and child care settings are encouraged to continue to use playground facilities for children in their care and use strategies to limit possible exposures.

## What about pets?

Treat pets as you would other human family members – do not let pets interact with people or animals outside the household. If a person inside the household becomes sick, isolate that person from everyone else, including pets. CDC is aware of a small number of pets worldwide, including cats and dogs, reported to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, mostly after close contact with people with COVID-19. Based on the limited information available to date, the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is considered to be low. It appears that the virus that causes COVID-19 can spread from people to animals in some situations. For more information about animals and pets, visit the [CDC](#) website for more guidance.

## Can we go to swimming pools?

Public swimming pools are closed during the Stay Safe Order, however, pools are open for youth programming. The [CDC](#) says to play it safe around and in swimming pools, and keep space between yourself and others. There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be spread to humans through the water. Proper operation, maintenance, and disinfection (with chlorine or bromine) of pools should kill COVID-19.

## What about visiting the doctor and child check-ups?

MDH and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends and supports the continued provision of health care for children during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the onset of the pandemic, a significant drop in well-child visits has resulted in delays of important screenings and preventive care. Pediatricians and health care providers have adapted to create telehealth when possible and to ensure in-person

visits are safe. Call your child's health care provider to see how the safest way to get health care for your child during the pandemic.

## **How should my family clean our house?**

Routine cleaning and disinfecting is important to maintaining a safe environment for children and families. Cleaning removes dirt and most germs and is usually done with soap and water. Disinfecting kills most germs, depending on the type of chemical, and only when the chemical product is used as directed on the label.

Consider regular cleaning of things that your family touches a lot: counters and other surfaces; telephones, remote controls and other devices; doorknobs, stairway railings and other objects. Use [EPA-registered household disinfectants](#) and CDC guidance on [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home](#).

## **Is it safe for my child or family to use buses and transportation?**

- Youth programs like day camps will likely encourage you to transport your kids versus using a bus where social distancing is challenging.
- CDC has specific guidance for bussing for youth programs when that is required and necessary (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/rideshare-drivers-for-hire.html>)

## **Is it safe for my child to have a friend over? Can my teen hang out with their friends?**

At this time, the recommendation is to ensure social distancing and gatherings are limited to 10 or under. There is risk with any intermixing of children, youth, families and communities. As children and teens interact, here are some tips:

- Maintain social distance and wear face coverings based on age recommendations.
- Play and interaction should occur outside wherever possible.
- Wherever feasible, encourage bag lunches from home rather than sharing food. If meals are served family-style, plate each meal to serve it so multiple people are not using the same serving utensils.
- Clean and disinfect common surfaces.
- Whenever possible, participant pick-up and drop-off should occur outside and be staggered if multiple families are involved.

## Is it okay for my family to travel?

Be mindful of traveling. Although the Stay Safe Order doesn't prohibit traveling, the Governor strongly urges all Minnesotans to stay near their residence. Staying close to home helps protect your neighbors from spreading COVID-19 and avoids crowding rural medical facilities. Avoiding this kind of travel makes us all safer and healthier. Some additional considerations:

- Limit your child's participation in summer programming to participants and staff who are arriving from Minnesota or bordering states.
- Ask staff and participants to limit their interaction with local communities when off-site to obtaining only essential services; and only allow sparingly or find other ways to get supplies/services. Follow appropriate social distancing and health etiquette measures when interacting with the community. For further guidance on travel, visit the [CDC website](#).

## What happens if someone in my family is exposed to someone with COVID-19?

People who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 need to isolate at home for 14 days from the last day of exposure. Only the person who had contact with the confirmed case needs to isolate at home. Other family members are able to continue their regular activities as long as the family member that was exposed does not become sick. You can find COVID-19 testing information on the [Minnesota COVID-19 response website](#).

## What happens if someone in my family gets sick?

In general, people diagnosed with COVID-19 will be asked to stay home until you have had no fever for at least 3 days AND improvement of other symptoms AND at least 10 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared.

Families should [Make a Plan](#) with your family about caring for your children and loved ones if you become ill and are not able to take care of those who need you, assuming that your children have too been exposed for to COVID-19.

Siblings and household members, and people identified as close contacts of the case will also need to stay home for 14 days. If someone in the cohort of 10 is diagnosed with COVID-19, the 9 other members of that group will likely need to stay home for 14 days since the last day they were exposed to that person.

## Questions?

Please send questions to [childrenscabinet.MMB@state.mn.us](mailto:childrenscabinet.MMB@state.mn.us) or call us at 651-259-3636.