

To: Parents / Caregivers and Community Members  
Object: Facing COVID – 19  
Source: [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

---

COVID-19 is a new virus and we are still learning about how it affects children. We know it is possible for people of any age to be infected with the virus, but so far, according to international health bodies, there have been relatively few cases of COVID-19 reported among children. The virus can be fatal in cases, so far mainly among older people with pre-existing medical conditions.

#### Know the latest facts

Understand basic information about coronavirus disease (COVID-19), including its symptoms, complications, how it is transmitted and how to prevent transmission. Stay informed about COVID-19 through reputable sources such as UNICEF and WHO and national health ministry advisories. Be aware of fake information/myths that may circulate by word-of-mouth or online.

#### Recognize the symptoms of COVID-19 (coughing, fever, shortness of breath) in your child

Seek medical advice by first calling your health facility/provider and then take your child in, if advised. Remember that symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough or fever can be similar to those of the flu, or the common cold, which are a lot more common. If your child is sick, keep them home from school and notify the school of your child's absence and symptoms. Request reading and assignments so that students can continue learning while at home. Explain to your child what is happening in simple words and reassure them that they are safe.

#### When deciding to send the children back to school

Teach them good hand and respiratory hygiene practices for school and elsewhere, like frequent handwashing (see below), covering a cough or sneeze with a flexed elbow or tissue, then throwing away the tissue into a closed bin, and not touching their eyes, mouths or noses if they haven't properly washed their hands. Review the "Back to School" slides available on the school e-learning platform.

#### Washing hands properly

Step 1: Wet hands with safe running water.

Step 2: Apply enough soap to cover wet hands.

Step 3: Scrub all surfaces of the hands – including backs of hands, between fingers and under nails – for at least 20 seconds.

Step 4: Rinse thoroughly with running water.

Step 5: Dry hands.

Wash your hands often, especially before and after eating; after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom/ toilets/latrines and whenever your hands are visibly dirty. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

### Help children cope with the stress

Children may respond to stress in different ways. Common responses include having difficulties sleeping, bedwetting, having pain in the stomach or head, and being anxious, withdrawn, angry, clingy, or afraid to be left alone. Respond to children's reactions in a supportive way and explain to them that they are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. Listen to their concerns and take time to comfort them and give them affection, reassure them they are safe and praise them frequently. If possible, create opportunities for children to play and relax. Keep regular routines and schedules as much as possible, especially before they go to sleep, or help create new ones in a new environment. Provide age-appropriate facts about what has happened, explain what is going on and give them clear examples on what they can do to help protect themselves and others from infection. Share information about what could happen in a reassuring way. For example, if your child is feeling sick and staying at home or the hospital, you could say, "You have to stay at home/at the hospital because it is safer for you and your friends. I know it is hard (maybe scary or even boring) at times, but we need to follow the rules to keep ourselves and others safe. Things will go back to normal soon."

### How is the school coping with the COVID – 19 situations?

- The school buildings, classrooms, and especially water and sanitation facilities are cleaned and disinfected at least once a day, particularly surfaces that are touched by many people (railings, lunch tables, door handles, teaching and learning aids, toys, etc.)
- Staff members ensure that social distancing procedures are respected throughout the school premises.
- Students' desks are disinfected at the beginning of each class: disinfecting solutions are available in each classroom and students are given special tissues to disinfect their desks. Since they are given two pieces of tissues each, make sure that they bring at least one clean one to the school every day while the other is kept home for washing and drying.
- Desks and chairs have been arranged in a way that respect social distancing.
- Signs and posters encouraging good hand and respiratory hygiene practices are posted throughout the school.
- The staff members wear masks and visors when interacting with the students.
- Handwashing stations (water and soap as well as hand sanitizers) are available in different spots across the school premises.
- Assemblies, sport games, open houses and other activities that create crowded conditions are cancelled.
- Hand washing, temperature checks and shoe sole cleaning stations are found upon entry into the school premises.
- All course contents are available online to allow students to follow the courses if they are unable to attend classes given the current situation.
- Each student receives two masks and two pieces of disinfecting clothes along with their pencil cases.
- Trash is removed daily and disposed of safely.

## CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS & COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- 1. Monitor your child's health and keep them home from school if they are ill.
- 2. Teach and model good hygiene practices for your children
  - Wash your hands with soap and safe water frequently. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water, if hands are visibly dirty
  - Ensure that safe drinking water is available and toilets or latrines are clean and available at home
  - Ensure waste is safely collected, stored and disposed of
  - Cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow and avoid touching your face, eyes, mouth, nose
- 3. Encourage your children to ask questions and express their feelings with you and their teachers. Remember that your child may have different reactions to stress; be patient and understanding.
- 4. Prevent stigma by using facts and reminding students to be considerate of one another
- 5. Keep informed on the school news.