

Schools are Reopening!

18 Ways Parents can keep the Kids Healthy during Coronavirus

According to Dr. Bridget Boyd, Loyola University Medical Center—General Pediatrics

1. Consider what's best for your family

. Kids who are in school get social-emotional skills, might get healthier meals and learn more math, reading and science. But if families have someone living at home who has immune system concerns or chronic health conditions, it might be up to the family to decide if it's worth sending them to school and increasing the risk of infection.

2. Teach them to properly wash their hands

. Make sure they're using soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

3. Explain the importance of wearing a mask

. Before kids head back to class, parents should speak to them about the importance of keeping their face covered, and how it protects other people — not just themselves.

4. Practice how to wear a mask

. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, children over the age of 2 should wear face masks in public.

5. Explain mask 'don't's'

. Wear the mask properly, covering the nose and mouth until down under the chin. Do not remove the mask to talk; the mask is essential when talking.

6. Explain how to handle sneezing and coughing

. If they do need to sneeze or cough, teach them to leave the face mask on and sneeze and cough into it. Lowering the mask to do so defeats the purpose of the mask.

7. Make sure their vaccines are up to date

8. Get the flu shot

. According to the CDC, children should get annual flu shots beginning when they are 6 months old.

9. Pack an extra mask in your child's backpack

. In case they soil one during the school day or have sneezed or coughed into it and wanted to change it to a clean one.

10. Consider what you pack for lunch

. Parents should consider the silly things kids might do, like taking their straw and blowing juice at their friend. Potentially minimizing juice boxes with straws and using more water bottles would be good.

11. Develop safe practices for children once they're back home

. Get in the habit of having your kids wash their hands adequately as soon as they get home from school. Ideally, they should also change their clothes and take their shoes off outside of the home or in the garage to try not to track anything in. It's debatable if taking a shower or bath immediately after coming home is absolutely necessary, but it certainly couldn't hurt; especially depending on the family's health situation.

12. Wash their cloth mask after every use

. If using disposable masks, toss each one when they are soiled or damaged.

13. Confirm what supplies your child can bring to school

. A compact hand sanitizer would be a good addition to their bags, but since they are alcohol-based, verify with the school if it is permitted. Kids may find it funny to try and ingest it.

14. Pack disinfectant wipes

. If they are permitted, add the disinfectant wipes to your child's back-to-school gear. Just be sure to avoid wipes that contain strong bleach as they could hurt someone.

15. Keep desks spaced and arranged facing in one direction

. There are some safety policies and precautions schools will likely take that you can prepare your child for. One of them is that desks should be spaced 6 feet apart.

16. Keep students in the same classroom

. Most state health recommendations include keeping kids in the same place and moving the teachers. Teachers rotate as necessary to minimize risk and students are only touching their own desk.

17. Maximize time outdoors

. Doing activities outside can be a little distracting, but letting students get exercise and move around in between lessons is also important.

18. Lead by example

. The most important thing a parent can do is try to be responsible themselves by wearing masks in public. If we keep our community spread low and try to do our part, we can potentially safely open schools. But if numbers start going up again, it's not going to be safe and everything is going to go back to online learning.

