



Should Children with an Underlying Medical Condition Attend School In-person?

Nearly all schools will reopen in some way during the 2020-2021 school year, whether in-person, remotely or a combination of both. To become better informed to make the decision of having your child(ren) attend in-person instruction during the 2020-2021 school year, the following guidance and recommendations from our physicians at Michigan Medicine C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, along with your child's primary physician, are here to assist.

We know information is limited and changing about how easily children of different ages contract and spread COVID-19. Most children do not have a high risk of serious COVID-19 disease, but prevention is the key to a safe return to school. Your school and state will have specific plans to keep children safe, and your local and state health department and [CDC website](#) will have the most current information.

RISK

If my child has an underlying medical condition, is he/she at higher risk of contracting COVID-19? If so, what will likely happen?

- Very few children, regardless of their medical diagnosis and treatment history, have had serious or fatal COVID-19 infections.
- Children who are frequently hospitalized with respiratory viruses are more likely to be hospitalized if they acquire COVID-19.
- If your child is currently undergoing specialized medical treatment, you will want to talk with the doctor who knows your child best to review any special recommendations.

If my child with an underlying medical condition becomes infected with COVID-19, will our family members or close contacts of my child be at higher risk of serious illness?

- Current research tells us adults over age 70, or with obesity, lung disease, or other chronic illnesses are at highest risk of serious illness.
- Children may not show symptoms of a COVID-19 infection and could possibly bring an infection home to a family member.

Can the brothers and sisters of a child with high risk return to in-person school?

- Brothers and sisters of a high-risk child may return to school.
- For siblings, infection prevention should be practiced both at school and in the home to lower the risk of giving the virus to other household members.

What are schools doing to keep children safe?

- Review the school's health and safety plans for limiting the transmission of the COVID-19 virus.
- The school should have a clear plan for physical distancing in transportation, classrooms and other shared spaces indoors and outdoors. Other recommendations include: universal mask use, washing hands, action plans for when a student or staff member has a known diagnosis or exposure, as well as disinfection procedures for all shared items and spaces.
- All students, teachers and staff, drivers and parents should be following the key public health measures of masking, washing, and 6-foot distancing.

SAFETY

Are there other preventative measures that my child should take in advance of returning to in-person instruction?

- Your child and others in their home should get all eligible immunizations, including this year's flu vaccination as soon as it is available.
- Have your child practice mask wearing for gradually increasing periods of time and practice what 6-foot physical distancing looks like.
- Be aware of the social and emotional needs of your child during this time. If you feel there are social and/or emotional needs beyond what you would expect or be able to support, contact your child's pediatrician for help.

Should my child stay home if there is a case of COVID-19 in their classroom or school?

- Schools and local public health departments will provide recommendations when cases are suspected or identified in a school or classroom.
- Typically, if there was not close contact with the person infected, it will likely be ok for the child to continue attending school in-person.

LEARNING PLANS

For my child with specific learning and/or medical needs are there suggested learning or health considerations?

- In the state of Michigan, virtual on-line school is an option for all students. This is different from homebound services. The addition of homebound services may be helpful for children who are unable to participate on a regular basis in a virtual on-line program due to their medical needs, either physical or psychiatric. These services may provide extra support for students who qualify. Check with your district and/or your child's primary care physician for details.
- Schools benefit from having you share information about what is needed to provide a safe environment for learning. For some children, it may be helpful to develop a specific plan for going back to in-person learning.
- For children with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 Plans, it is recommended that the plans be reviewed in detail within the first two weeks of returning to school. Review how academic progress will take place and that related health and safety plans are in place.
- Connecting quickly with your child's teacher and school is the first step when there are concerns about your child's learning needs. When you need additional resources, you may want to connect with your state's Department of Education and student advocacy groups. For Michigan's children with IEPs, this would be the Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education and Michigan Alliance for Families.
- The Michigan Department of Education's site has timely resources and support on many topics related to the COVID-19 pandemic and school. This is a good site for accurate information that continues to be updated.
- Resources to support virtual and on-line learning are available through "Alt+Shift," a Michigan Department of Education site for families and teachers.

