



#stopthespread



A TOOLKIT FOR
Parents and Students



USING THIS TOOLKIT TO PREPARE FOR A HEALTHY SCHOOL YEAR

This school year will be different.

Families and educators across Missouri are preparing to return to school during the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that schools play an essential role in educating our children and providing a safe place for them to learn and grow. We also know that when large groups of people are together – like in a school – there is an opportunity for COVID-19 to spread.

Educators and public health experts across Missouri are working together to plan for a safe school year. They will use everything we've learned about COVID-19 to stop the spread. These plans will be different in every school and may change as we learn more about the virus.

Families can help stop the spread.

Parents and caregivers have a critical role to play in preparing students for a healthy school year. You should expect to hear updates from your student's school throughout the school year. After reading and digesting these updates on your own, discuss them with your student.

Help your student understand how viruses like COVID-19 spread, what they can do to stop the spread, and why the changes at school are important. Start practicing healthy habits at home so they will be second nature by the time your student returns to school.

Use this toolkit to get ready for school.

This toolkit will help you have these conversations with your student. On the following pages, you'll find activities for your child to learn about COVID-19 and school. As you complete the activities together, talk about the changes that they can expect at school. Answer their questions as much as you can.

For more information on COVID-19 and returning to school, visit oneforallmo.com/back-to-school or contact your local public health agency.



THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND AS YOU TALK WITH YOUR CHILD

Returning to school is a big transition.

Families will likely experience a range of emotions about the changes at school. Remember that children often reflect the stress of the adults around them. Model a calm and positive attitude when approaching the school year so your child can feel prepared and confident.

There are steps you can take to stop the spread.

Families can stop the virus from spreading by taking simple steps like staying home when you are sick, washing your hands, and wearing a mask. Keep taking these steps, even if it seems like COVID-19 is slowing down in your community.

Recommendations may change throughout the year.

Public health experts are working with school districts to build plans that work for their specific communities. Plans may change throughout the school year as we learn more about the virus and how it is transmitted. Remind your child that these changes are temporary, and that new changes could come during the school year.

Misinformation is rampant.

Myths about COVID-19 may spread at school and in the school community. Encourage your child to discuss their questions with trusted adults. Talk about which sources of information are reliable and trustworthy. Local public health experts are the best sources of information about COVID-19 in your community.

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ANSWERING TOUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT COVID-19 AND SCHOOL

If there is still a virus, why are we going back to school?

Even though there is still a virus, many important places in our community are open, like doctors' offices and grocery stores. Schools are very important because they are safe places for kids to learn. We have learned a lot about how to stop the spread of the virus. Schools will use this information to keep students and teachers safe.

Why are some schools open while other schools are having class online?

Every school is a little bit different. Leaders at the schools, like principals, worked with public health experts to make plans for their school. When they made the plans, they thought about things like the size of the school, how many students there are, and how the virus is spreading in their area. Some schools will be able to open safely. For other schools, it is safer to have classes online. Schools might change their plans during the school year too.

Can kids get or spread COVID-19?

Anyone can catch COVID-19 and spread it to other people. Usually kids do not get as sick with the virus as older people. We all need to take the virus seriously and take steps to prevent getting the virus and spreading it to other people who might get very sick.

Is it safe to play with my friends now?

It has been hard to be away from our friends. Because there is still a virus, we need to be careful when we see our friends. We can do simple things to make it safer to play together. We can play outside, where it is harder for the virus to spread. We should try to keep our distance and not touch or hug. We can also wear a mask so we don't spread germs to friends when we're talking, laughing, or singing.

Why do we have to wear masks?

COVID-19 can spread on tiny droplets that come out of our nose and mouth. Masks stop these droplets from spreading to the people around us. Sometimes people can have COVID-19 and not feel sick. They might spread these germs without realizing it. That is why it is important for everyone to wear a mask, even if we don't feel sick.

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ANSWERING TOUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT COVID-19 AND SCHOOL

What will we do if someone in our house gets sick?

If someone in our house gets sick, they will stay home from work and school so they don't share germs with other people. If someone in our family has symptoms of COVID-19, we will call the doctor. The doctor will tell us if we need to have a test for COVID-19. Usually when someone has the virus they can stay at home until they are feeling better. They can stay in a separate room so they don't spread the virus to other family members.

What will we do if our teacher or classmate gets sick?

If someone at school is sick with COVID-19, they will need to stay home for about two weeks. If you were near that person while they were sick, you might also have to stay home until we are sure you are not carrying the virus. This is what people call "quarantine."

What if I feel sick at school?

If you start to feel sick during the school day, tell your teacher or another adult. You might have to wait in a room by yourself while you wait to be picked up. This is to stop germs from spreading in class or in the nurse's office.

How long will these changes last?

We don't know how long these changes will last, and there might be new changes during the school year. The more we can take actions to stop the virus – like washing our hands, wearing masks, and physical distancing – the sooner we can go back to a more normal life at school.

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