

COVID-19 FAQ: Children

- What is the risk of my child becoming sick with COVID-19?

Children can be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 and can get sick with COVID-19. Most children with COVID-19 have mild symptoms or they may have no symptoms at all (“asymptomatic”). Fewer children have been sick with COVID-19 compared to adults. However, children with certain [underlying medical conditions](#) and infants (less than 1 year old) might be at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Some children have developed a rare but serious disease that is linked to COVID-19 called [multisystem inflammatory syndrome \(MIS-C\)](#).

- Should children wear masks?

In general, children 2 years and older should [wear a mask](#). Masks offer some protection to you and are also meant to protect those around you, in case you are unknowingly infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. However, CDC recognizes that wearing masks may not be possible in every situation or for some people. Appropriate and consistent use of masks may be challenging for some children, such as children with certain disabilities, including cognitive, intellectual, developmental, sensory and behavioral disorders. Learn more about what you should do if your child or you [cannot wear masks in certain situations](#).

- What is multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C)?

[Multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children \(MIS-C\)](#) is a serious condition associated with COVID-19 where different body parts can become inflamed, including the heart, lungs, kidneys, brain, skin, eyes, or gastrointestinal organs.

- Can my child hang out with their friends during the pandemic?

The more people your child interacts with, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. While your child may spend time with other people when they return to childcare or school settings, reducing the number of people your child interacts with outside people within your household, childcare facility or school can reduce the risk of getting and spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. CDC recommends children 2 years of age and older wear a [mask](#) in public settings or when around people who do not live in their household, especially when it is difficult to stay at least 6 feet from others. However, masks should not be a substitute for other preventive measures such as frequent hand washing and staying at least 6 feet away from others.

- Can my child spend time with older adults and people with chronic medical conditions?

[Older adults](#) and people who have certain [underlying medical conditions](#) are at increased risk for getting severely ill from COVID-19.

- If you live with people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19, consider separating your child from them if your child has frequent interactions with those outside the household (like at schools or other settings).
 - Consider postponing visits or trips to see grandparents, older family members, or family members with underlying medical conditions while there are high levels of transmission (or high number of COVID-19 cases) in your community.
 - If your child does visit someone who is over age 65 or has an underlying medical condition that puts that them at risk of severe illness, your child should stay at least 6 feet away from that person. Everyone should wear a mask when visiting. Masks should not be placed on children younger than 2 years old, anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, and anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
 - Take steps to help [protect your child from COVID-19](#) in order to reduce the risk of your child spreading the virus that causes COVID-19 to others especially people at increased risk of severe illness.
- My child has an underlying medical condition. What additional steps should my family take?
- Consider identifying potential alternative caregivers, in case you or other regular caregivers become sick and are unable to care for your child. If possible, these alternative caregivers should not be at [increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19](#) For more information, see [Sick Parents and Caregivers](#). Make sure these caregivers take extra precautions if [your child has a disability](#).
 - If your child receives any support care services in the home, such as services from personal care attendants, direct support professionals, or therapists, make plans for what you will do if your child's direct care providers or anyone in your family gets sick.
- Should my infant or child be tested for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19?

Not everyone needs to be tested. Your infant or child may need to be tested for SARS-CoV-2 if your child:

- Has [symptoms of COVID-19](#), or
- Had [close contact](#) (within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period) with someone who tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, or

- Took part in activities that put them at higher risk for COVID-19, because they could not stay at least 6 feet apart as needed (such as travel, attending large social or mass gatherings, or being in a crowded or poorly ventilated indoor setting), or
- Was asked or referred to get testing by their [state](#), [tribal](#), [local](#)
- [external icon](#)
- , or [territorial health department](#) or healthcare provider.

[Daycare and school settings](#) that use multiple [prevention strategies](#), such as universal and correct use of masks and keeping people at least 6 feet apart as much as possible, are not considered higher risk settings. If your child attends daycare or in-person school, they should be tested only if they meet one of the above criteria.

If your child is tested because they have [COVID-19 symptoms](#) or have been in [close contact with someone with COVID-19](#), keep your child home until they can safely end [isolation](#) or [quarantine](#) and follow the advice of your healthcare provider or a public health professional. If your child has [recovered from COVID-19 in the past 3 months](#) and *does not* have symptoms of COVID-19, they do not need to be retested for up to 3 months from their last positive test result.

Some schools may choose to use [screening testing](#) of students as a way to find asymptomatic cases and prevent spread of COVID-19. Screening testing is use of SARS-CoV-2 tests to identify cases of COVID-19 in people *without* symptoms or without known [close contact](#) with someone with COVID-19. Your child's school should communicate any plans about screening testing with you before your child is tested. School-based screening testing should not be conducted without consent from the person to be tested (for adults) or from a parent or legal guardian (for minor students). Children who have [recovered from COVID-19 in the past 3 months](#) should not undergo screening testing.