

# Tips for Families: Helping Children and Adolescents Transition Back to School

## Considerations

Families play an important role in helping children and adolescents understand how COVID-19 is transmitted and the precautions they can take to reduce the spread of the virus. When determining how to help children and adolescents transition, consider the various persons involved (e.g., student, teacher, paraprofessional), the multiple environments encountered (e.g., classroom, gymnasium), and the array of tasks and occupations performed (e.g., learning, playing). Below are some tips for families when helping children and adolescents transition back to school.

## Talk About COVID-19

- Provide [truthful and accurate information about COVID-19](#) that is at the child or adolescent's developmental level.
- Invite questions and recognize opportunities to discuss worries and concerns.
- Help children and adolescents feel a sense of control by exploring [habits they can use to prevent the spread of COVID-19](#), like wearing a mask and washing hands regularly.
- Share mood boosting [strategies](#) that you use to help keep yourself safe and calm.
- Explain how [some people need to take extra precautions](#) to reduce their risk of contracting COVID-19.
- Discuss the roles and responsibilities of school personnel in helping to make sure that children and adolescents are safe at school.

## Practice Healthy Habits and Routines at Home and in the Community

- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or with an elbow.
- [Follow good hand hygiene routines](#), like washing hands with soap and water before eating, after going to the bathroom, and when you come home after being out.
  - Use hand sanitizer if hand washing isn't possible.
- If gatherings are allowed, avoid crowds and big groups (like parties, playdates, and get togethers) with people who are sick or have recently tested positive for COVID-19.
- Follow [social distancing guidelines](#) when out in the community.

## Develop New Habits and Routines for Returning to School

- [Practice wearing masks or other facial coverings](#) for extended periods during different activities (e.g., reading, engaging in social media, talking with family members) and in different environments (e.g., inside buildings, while outside).
- Teach children to treat masks and other facial coverings with the same care they would use for prescription eyeglasses (e.g., do not play with masks or remove at inappropriate times).
- Send spare masks or other facial coverings and extra hygiene supplies (e.g., hand sanitizer, wipes) to school.
- Demonstrate how to [put on and take off masks and other facial coverings](#) and how to store them when they are not in use.
- Ask children and adolescents how they are feeling on a daily basis and monitor for [symptoms related to COVID-19](#).
- Take daily temperatures if required by the school district.

- [Develop a plan](#) should someone in the family become ill with COVID-19.
- Become familiar with the school's policies and procedures for reporting illnesses, and add school numbers and email addresses to phone contacts.
- Monitor school newsletters, emails, and websites for updates regarding schedule changes and school closures.
- Communicate with school personnel regarding the physical assistance needed for students disabilities (e.g., help using the bathroom or eating) and discuss the types of personal protective equipment and hygiene practices that will be used during such times.

## Prepare for E-Learning/Distance Learning Days

- Develop a plan for childcare or adolescent supervision on e-learning/distance learning days.
- Establish [regular times for waking up and going to sleep](#).
- Develop an easy-to-follow [daily schedule](#) that includes periods for school work and for breaks.
  - Set a consistent start time and end time.
  - Identify and prioritize key assignments that need to be completed.
- [Set up work space](#) for e-learning/distance learning.
- Use timers to help with focus and staying on-task.
- Provide opportunities for children and adolescents to move their bodies throughout the day.
- Help children and adolescents stay connected with friends through online classroom breakout groups, messaging, and video chats.
- Recognize that boredom may occur, and encourage children and adolescents to engage in a variety of different types of leisure activities (e.g., games, puzzles, cooking, or crafting).

## General Resources

- [American Occupational Therapy Association-Resource Guide for Families During COVID-19](#) (PDF)
- [American Occupational Therapy Association—4 Tips for Families During COVID-19](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Checklist for Parents](#)
- [Healthychildren.org 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network's Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope with COVID-19](#)

## Resources for Talking About COVID-19 With Children and Adolescents

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Talking with Children About COVID-19](#)
- [CNN/Sesame Street Coronavirus Town Hall](#)
- [Mayo Clinic's How to Talk to Your Kids About COVID-19](#)
- [National Public Radio's Just for Kids: A Comic Exploring the New Coronavirus](#)
- [New York Times Talking to Teens and Tweens about Coronavirus](#)

## Resources for Healthy Habits and Routines

- American Occupational Therapy Association's Establishing Bedtime Routines (in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)) (PDF)
- [American Occupational Therapy Association's Establishing Morning Routines for Children](#) (PDF)
- [American Occupational Therapy Association's Tips for Homework Success](#) (PDF)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Cover Your Coughs and Sneezes video](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Guidance for Social Distancing](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Wash Your Hands video](#)
- [Cincinnati Children's Hospital video About Social Distancing](#)
- [WCVB Channel 5 Boston's How to Get a Child to Wear a Mask](#)
- [We Wear Masks: A Social Story About Wearing Masks](#)