

## Coronavirus FAQ for Parents

Tennessee Department of Health has launched a Tennessee Coronavirus Public Information Line in partnership with the Tennessee Poison Center. The hotline number is **877-857-2945** and will be available from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. CT daily.

### **How does the coronavirus (COVID-19) spread?**

The spread pattern appears to mirror those of the common cold or flu. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, generally between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).

This spread appears to occur through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

### **What are the primary symptoms of the virus? What should I be looking for?**

Reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death for confirmed coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases.

The following symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

### **What should I do if my child or someone in my family is exhibiting symptoms?**

Call ahead to a healthcare professional if you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or difficulty breathing, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or if you live in or have recently traveled to an area with ongoing spread. Tell your healthcare professional about your recent travel or contact. Your healthcare professional will work with your state's public health department to determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19.

### **Can someone spread the virus without being sick?**

People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest). Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms; there have been reports of this occurring with this new coronavirus, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

### **Are children more at risk for the coronavirus and how should infection be prevented?**

No, according to the health officials, there is no evidence that children are more susceptible. In fact, most confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported from China have occurred in adults. Read more [here](#).

Children should engage in usual preventive actions to avoid infection, including cleaning hands often using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer, avoiding people who are sick, and staying up to date on

vaccinations, including influenza vaccine.

### **What other precautions should we take?**

Health officials recommend everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

### **Should my child wear a facemask?**

It is not recommended that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

### **Should I continue sending my child to school and after school activities?**

As always, if your child is sick, they should stay home until they are symptom-free and/or fever-free for a full 24 hours, without the use of fever reducing medication. But as Tennessee Department of Health officials have stated, the risk to the general public continues to be low.

### **How is the decision made for a school to close?**

Districts will work with local health officials to make closure and dismissal decisions. If a determination is made a school must close, the school will seek specific guidance from local health officials to determine if, when, and for how long to take these steps.

### **If my school must close, will remote learning be an option? Or will my school have to add days on to the end of the school year?**

Schools and districts have been reviewing their e-learning plans and options. Each school in Tennessee must complete 180 days of classroom instruction. Schools that exceed the full 6½ hours of instructional time required by law by ½ hour daily for the full academic year are credited with the additional instructional time. The excess instructional time of up to 13 instructional days each year, may be applied toward meeting instructional time requirements missed due to dangerous or extreme weather conditions or serious outbreaks of illness. Most schools in Tennessee accumulate 13 stockpile days. In addition, in the event of a natural disaster or serious outbreaks of illness affecting or endangering students or staff during a school year, the law authorizes the commissioner of education to waive for that school year the requirement of 180 days of classroom instruction. We will be working with school districts on a case by case basis if the need arises.

**What are our schools doing related to prevention and preparation?**

Schools and childcare services have received guidance from state and federal health care officials to help them plan and prepare if COVID-19 does appear in their community. This includes common sense precautions like handwashing practices, environmental cleaning and sharing resources. Read more [here](#). Schools where a COVID-19 case has appeared will work with the local health department and other relevant leadership to communicate the possible COVID-19 exposure and take immediate action to prevent the spread.