



For children and youth: COVID-19 information you can trust

No one wants to put their child at risk. But parenting through the pandemic can sometimes feel marred with choices: Is it more important to prevent illness, or isolation? What about kids with diabetes, or epilepsy, or ADHD?

Yes, there's lots of information on COVID-19 – on the news, on social media and in discussions with family and friends.

Not all of it is correct.
Not all is necessarily right for your child.

As child health experts, we are very concerned about young people's wellbeing.

Eating disorders have increased significantly and many children and youth report new or worsening anxiety and depression. Lower physical activity, higher screen time use and reduced preventative care will come with health consequences for an entire generation. Children need our help to get back to learning and other regular activities. As a start, **we urge parents to have their families vaccinated as quickly as possible.** Vaccination benefits almost all children irrespective of race, health status or geography, and remains our best protection against severe health outcomes from COVID-19.

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QUESTIONS PARENTS CAN ASK TO MAKE SENSE OF COVID-19 INFORMATION



1. Who is generating the information?

The **impact of health decisions is often different for children and youth than they are for adults.** Child and youth researchers and health professionals – doctors, nurses and occupational therapists, among many others – are trained to weigh risks, benefits and vulnerabilities unique to this age group. Ask whether child and youth health experts were involved in this information, and whether evidence is based on research that includes children and youth – not just adults.



2. Have risks and benefits been described?

Kids and youth have essential social, emotional and developmental needs that can outweigh the need for viral protection. The risks of COVID-19 must also be considered relative to the risks of other common viral illnesses in children. Listen for child health professionals and researchers who can outline how to manage risk while also preventing the over-restriction of children in their social, physical and educational activities. And seek out the voices of child advocates – as well as your own children – when you hear information about COVID-19.



3. Has the impact on the most vulnerable been considered?

Some infants, children and youth have medical conditions that put them at increased risk of more severe outcomes from COVID-19. Other children may experience disproportionate suffering from social isolation or remote learning because of their age, race, abilities or socioeconomic status. All of these vulnerabilities must be part of decisions to protect children from harm.



4. Is this the best way to support children and youth now?

Some measures to protect children and youth from COVID-19 have no “best-before” date: Vaccines are safe and effective for school-aged children and youth, so easy access must be a priority; investments in improving air quality will benefit all children and youth in shared spaces. Beyond this, when we hear new decisions affecting children and youth, ask whether they address what's needed at this moment.



5. How will this benefit children and youth in the long-term?

Make sure the value of restrictions for school-aged children takes both policy and emerging research into account. Consider whether pandemic recovery plans treat children and youth holistically – balancing protection from COVID-19 with physical and mental health.

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