

Patient Education

COVID-19 Discharge Instructions, Child

You must carefully read the "Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer" below in order to understand and correctly use this information

About this topic

Coronavirus disease 2019 is also known as COVID-19. It is caused by a virus called SARS-associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2).

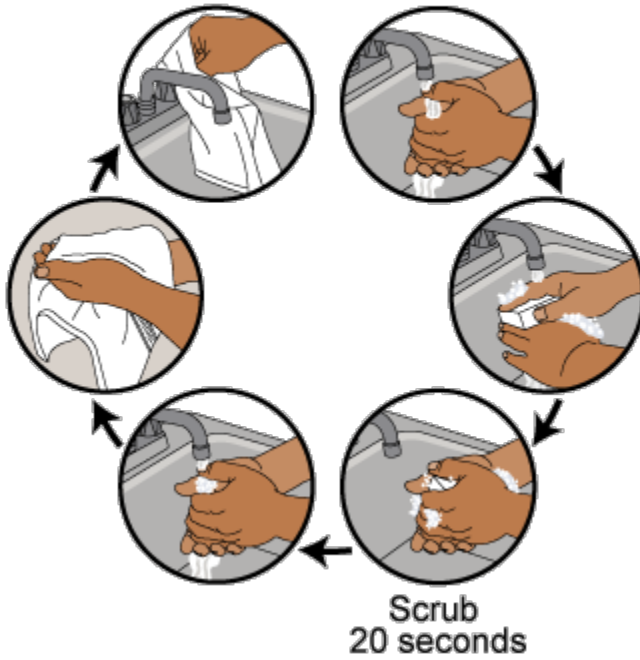
The signs of COVID-19 most often start 4 to 5 days after you have been infected. In some people, it can take up to 2 weeks to show signs. Others never show signs of the infection. Your child may have a cough, fever, shaking chills and it may be hard for them to breathe. Your child may be very tired, have muscle aches, a headache, or a sore throat. Some children have an upset stomach or loose stools. Others lose their sense of smell or taste. Babies may have trouble feeding. Some children with COVID-19 get reddish-purple spots on their fingers or toes. Your child may not have these signs all the time and they may come and go while they are sick.

The virus spreads easily through droplets when a person with the infection talks, sneezes, or coughs. People can pass the virus on to others when they are talking close together, singing, hugging, sharing food, or shaking hands. Doctors believe the germs also survive on surfaces like tables, door handles, and telephones. However, this is not a common way that COVID-19 spreads. They can also spread the infection even if they don't have any symptoms, but they do not know how that happens. This is why getting your child vaccinated when they are able is one of the best ways to keep them healthy, and slow the spread of the virus. Children age 12 and older should also get a booster shot to give them extra protection.

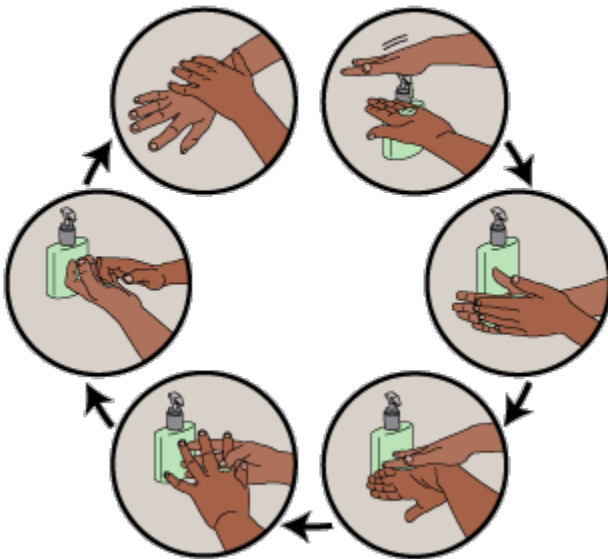
Some children have a mild case of COVID-19 and are able to be cared for at home and away from others until they feel better. Others may need to be in the hospital if they are very sick. Some children also have inflammation throughout their body. Children with COVID-19 must be isolated from others. They can start to be around others when their doctor says it is safe to do so.

Image(s)

Hand Washing



Hand Sanitizing



What care is needed at home?

- Ask your doctor what you need to do when you go home. Make sure you ask questions if you do not understand what the doctor says.
- Have your child drink lots of water, juice, or broth to replace fluids lost from a fever.

- You may use cool mist humidifiers in your child’s room to help ease congestion and coughing.
- Older children may want to use 2 to 3 pillows to prop themselves up when they lie down. This may make it easier to breathe and sleep.
- Do not smoke around your child.
- If your child has not had the COVID-19 vaccine and booster, they should get one after their infection has resolved. This will help lower the chance of passing the infection to others.
- To lower the chance of passing the infection to others your child should:
 - Stay home while they recover. Only go out if they need to get medical care.
 - At home, try to keep your child in a separate room, away from other people and animals. This is called "self-isolation." Have your child use a separate bathroom if possible.
 - Wear a mask over their mouth and nose if they are over 2 years old and around others who are not sick. Respirator masks like N95 and KN95 can filter out even very tiny air particles. Whatever type of mask you use, it’s important that it fit snugly over your face with no gaps. You can improve the fit by using a mask with an adjustable nose wire, adjusting or knotting the ear loops to make it tighter, or wearing a cloth mask on top of a disposable mask.
 - Wear a mask if your child is around other people. If other people have to be in the same room or vehicle with them, they should wear a mask also.
 - Wash their hands often. You may need to help them with this. Remind them to avoid touching their face, mouth, nose, and eyes.
- Continue to keep your child away from others until your doctor or nurse tells you it's OK for them to return to their normal activities. When your child can stop self-isolation will depend on how long it has been since they have had symptoms, and in some cases, whether they have had a negative test (showing that the virus is no longer in their body).

What follow-up care is needed?

- Your doctor may ask you to bring your child to the office to check on their progress. Be sure to keep these visits.
- If you can, tell the staff your child has COVID-19 ahead of time so they can take extra care to stop the disease from spreading. They may place you in a separate room; or ask that you wait in your car until they call you.
- It may take a few weeks before your child’s health returns to normal.

What drugs may be needed?

The doctor may order drugs to:

- Help with fever

- Help with breathing

Will physical activity be limited?

Your child may have to limit their physical activity. Talk to the doctor about the right amount of activity for your child. If your child has been very sick with COVID-19, it can take some time to get their strength back.

Will there be any other care needed?

Doctors do not know how long a person can pass the virus on to others after they are sick. This is why it is important to keep your child in a separate room, if possible, when they are sick. For now, doctors are giving general guidelines for you to follow after your child has been sick. Before your child goes around other people, they should:

- Be fever free for 24 hours without taking any drugs to lower their fever
- Have no symptoms of cough or shortness of breath
- Wait at least 10 days after they first have symptoms or their first positive test, and they need to be symptom free as above. Some experts suggest waiting 20 days if you have had a more severe infection.

Talk with your child's doctor about COVID-19 vaccines and boosters for children.

What problems could happen?

- Fluid loss. This is dehydration.
- Short-term or long-term lung damage
- Heart problems
- Death

When do I need to call the doctor?

- Your child is having so much trouble breathing that they can only say one or two words at a time.
- Your child needs to sit upright at all times to be able to breathe or cannot lie down.
- Your child has pain or pressure in their chest.
- Your child has blue lips or face.
- Your child acts confused or does not respond.
- Your child has a fever above 100.4° F (38.4°C) for more than 24 hours and has a rash.
- Your child has trouble breathing when talking or sitting still.
- Your child can't keep any fluids down, has not had anything to drink in many hours, **and** has one or more of the following:

- Your child is not as alert as usual, is very sleepy, or much less active.
 - Your child is crying all the time.
 - Your infant has not had a wet diaper in over 8 hours.
 - Your older child has not needed to urinate in over 12 hours.
 - Your child's skin is cool.
- Your child is having trouble feeding normally.
 - Your child has a dry mouth.
 - Your child has few or no tears when they cry.
 - Your child's urine is dark in color.
 - Your child is less active than normal.
 - Your child throws up blood or has bloody diarrhea.
 - Your child has diarrhea that lasts more than a few days.
 - Your child has vomiting that lasts more than 1 day.
 - Your child seems to get worse after improving for a few days.
 - Your child develops reddish-purple spots on their fingers or toes.

Teach Back: Helping You Understand

The Teach Back Method helps you understand the information we are giving you. After you talk with the staff, tell them in your own words what you learned. This helps to make sure the staff has described each thing clearly. It also helps to explain things that may have been confusing. Before going home, make sure you can do these:

- I can tell you about my child's condition.
- I can tell you what may help ease my child's breathing.
- I can tell you what I can do to help avoid passing the infection to others.
- I can tell you what I will do if my child has trouble breathing, feels sleepy or confused, or reddish-purple spots on their fingers or toes.

Where can I learn more?

American Academy of Pediatrics

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/2019-Novel-Coronavirus.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>

World Health Organization

<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

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