



Coronavirus Information for Families

The Rhode Island Departments of Education and Health have gathered information from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help inform Rhode Island families how to best prevent and control the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

What is the coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

How does the coronavirus spread?

The virus appears to occur mainly from person to person, between people who are in close contact with one another (within ~6 feet). The virus is spread through respiratory droplets produced when a person infected with COVID-19 coughs or sneezes. These respiratory droplets can remain on objects and surfaces making it also possible for an individual to become infected through touching an infected surface and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes.

What are the primary symptoms of the coronavirus?

COVID-19 patients have ranged from reporting mild to severe respiratory issues along with symptoms that may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus including:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

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

Call your healthcare professional if you or a member of your family is exhibiting any of the above outlined symptoms. Inform your healthcare professional if you have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or if you have recently traveled to an area with an ongoing COVID-19 outbreak. Your healthcare professional will work with the Rhode Island Department of Public Health to determine if you should be tested for COVID-19.

When should I keep my child home from school?

As always, if your child is sick, they should stay home until they are symptom-free for at least 24-hours. If your child's symptoms persist, or if they are exhibiting any of the above outlined symptoms, keep them at home and immediately contact your healthcare provider. Talk with teachers about classroom assignments and activities they can do from home to keep up with their schoolwork.



Are children more at risk for the coronavirus?

Early reports suggest that children with confirmed COVID-19 have generally presented with mild symptoms, and though severe complications have been reported, they appear to be uncommon. Those who experience an elevated risk of exposure include:

- People who are close contacts of someone known to have COVID-19
- Healthcare workers caring for patients with COVID-19
- People in places with ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks
- Travelers returning from affected international locations where COVID-19 outbreaks have occurred

What precautions should my family take to prevent infection of this virus?

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash
- Wash 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 a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Discourage children and teens from gathering in other public places while school is dismissed to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in the community
- If you have traveled anywhere internationally (or anywhere overnight in the U.S.) in the last 14 days, monitor yourself for symptoms of COVID-19. These symptoms include fever, cough, or shortness of breath.
- For people who have traveled to China, Iran, Italy, South Korea, or Japan, in addition to monitoring yourself for symptoms, self-quarantine for 14 days. That means do not go to work or school and stay at home.

Should my child wear a face mask?

If your child **is not sick**, they should **not** wear a face mask. Face masks may be in short supply and they should be saved for caregivers of person's infected with COVID-19. Patients with confirmed or suspected **COVID-19** should **wear** a face mask until they are isolated in a hospital or at home.

Are children with underlying health conditions or a medically related disability at higher risk?

There have been very few reports of the clinical outcomes for children with COVID-19 to date. Limited reports from China suggest that children with confirmed COVID-19 may present with mild symptoms and though severe complications (acute respiratory distress syndrome, septic shock) have been reported, they appear to be uncommon. However, as with other respiratory illnesses, certain



populations of children may be at increased risk of severe infection, such as children with underlying health conditions. Learn [more](#).

What are schools doing related to prevention and preparation?

The CDC has encouraged schools to:

- Review, update and implement school emergency operation plans
- Emphasize actions for students and staff to take such as staying home when sick; appropriately covering coughs and sneezes; and washing hands often
- Routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces
- Monitor and plan for addressing fear and bullying related to COVID-19
- Monitor and plan for dismissals/absenteeism

How is the decision made for a school to close?

Districts are working with the Rhode Island Departments of Education and Health to make decisions regarding closings and dismissals. Duration of school dismissals will be made on a case-by-case basis based on the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 and the specific situation in a given community. Students and their families should be prepared for durations that could last several days.

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

Every community needs to be ready to support and serve students in the event our schools are closed for a prolonged period of time. RIDE has asked each district to prepare and submit a closure plan that will support instruction if schools need to be closed for an extended period of time. These plans will vary, and they may include virtual learning and a plan to make up missed days that extend the school year.

How will I know if someone in my school community is sick with COVID-19?

Districts are working with the Rhode Island Departments of Education and Health to support school leaders and the whole school community. If someone in your community is sick, please remain calm and follow guidance from the school. Remember that health care information is confidential and should never be shared on social media platforms.

Additional Resources:

- RI Department of Health [Coronavirus webpage](#)
- CDC Information on [COVID-19 and children](#)

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