COVID-19
Returning to School: Preparing for What’s Next

The ongoing pandemic raises uncertainties about the reopening of schools, whether onsite, online or a combination of both. Once your child’s school provides an official reopening announcement, the following suggestions can help prepare you and your child for what’s next.

Learn what preventive/safety measures are being taken. Most notably, sanitizing, social distancing to and from class, in the classrooms and bathrooms, and during lunch break and recess. Find out about the school’s temporary dismissal plan if there is an outbreak.

Ask about the technology needed for online learning. What equipment or instruction is required? Will technical assistance be available?

Have an open conversation with your kids. Go over the changes they may expect at school such as mask wearing, distancing, and other measures to keep them and their teachers healthy. Have them think of ways they could bond and stay together with friends at school when distancing.

For required mask wearing, get them used to wearing for prolonged periods. For example, have them wear their mask when watching TV, playing outside, or going for family walks. (If your child has breathing problems, consult your doctor).

Model proper hand washing and how to avoid spreading germs. Show them how to cover a cough with their sleeve or elbow. Ask them to tell you if they start to feel like they have a fever, cough, or are having difficulty breathing.

Teach them to respect different opinions. Children and adults may disagree on recommendations, and they should let their teacher know if they are concerned about disagreements or not feeling safe.

Remind them of the positives. For example, they will be able to see their friends and teachers (if they are physically returning to the classroom) and continue learning new things.

Let them know ahead of time that schools may need to close again. Remind them that learning can happen at school or at home and that they can keep in touch with and support their friends online in the meantime.

Keep kids safe online. Talk to them about how to make safe choices about who they talk to online, and not sharing passwords or other private information.

Manage your emotions, stay calm, and check in with your kids. Look for signs of anxiety, anger, fear, or worry such as reluctance to go to school, withdrawal, or sleep difficulties.

If you or your family members are feeling overwhelmed at any stage, reach out to a licensed counselor for help or talk to your healthcare practitioner.

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