

What every parent needs to know about COVID-19

- Coronaviruses have been with us for many years and usually causes illnesses similar to the common cold in infants, children, and adolescents.
- This coronavirus causes a new disease called COVID-19, which started in China and is now spreading across the globe. We are still learning about this illness.
- Parents can find out the latest information about this evolving illness at the following websites:
 - baystatehealth.org/covid19
 - cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov
 - mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19
 - healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/2019-Novel-Coronavirus.aspx
- The good news from what we know so far is **healthy pediatric patients are far less likely to have a serious illness than elderly patients who are infected by this virus.**

What you can do to prevent COVID-19:

Teach your children to wash their hands often. Washing their hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds with soap and water is the best way to kill this virus, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing. Singing the happy birthday song twice takes about 20 seconds and it makes washing hands fun for children.

Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol when you are unable to have your children wash their hands with soap and water.

Teach children to cover their cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. If a tissue is unavailable, teach them to cough into their elbows and not into their hands. The virus spreads when people touch their eyes, nose and mouth after getting the virus on their hands, so limiting the amount of virus on their hands and limiting touching their nose and eyes will help prevent infection.

Avoid sick people: Keep your kids away from people that are sick or who are coughing.

Stay home when sick: If your child does have a mild illness they should stay home so they do not spread that illness to others in the community, particularly the elderly and people with underlying medical conditions such as diabetes and asthma.

Disinfect surfaces: The virus can live on common household surfaces so disinfecting household objects and surfaces on a regular basis is a good way to prevent the spread of the virus.

Be prepared: If your child becomes ill with fever, cough, and other viral symptoms ***you need to be prepared to keep your child at home until his or her illness has resolved.*** You should have ibuprofen or acetaminophen at home for your child so you can treat them if they have fever or pain. You should have saline drops at home to help with nasal congestion especially in infants and toddlers. For children over 1 year old, honey is the best medicine for a cough.

If your child has a chronic medical condition such as asthma or diabetes you want to be sure that you have any prescription medicine needed at home and that you have a plan to manage their chronic illness when they are sick. Speak to your pediatrician to create a “sick day plan.”