We understand that every school faces unique challenges, but certain overarching precautions apply to all. The experts of University Hospitals Rainbow Babies and Children’s Hospital offer information and guidance to help you think through strategies and make the decisions that will work best for your school and community. This playbook is based on current guidelines and the latest scientific information we have available, so that you can create as healthy an environment as possible in a COVID-19 world, when you are planning to reopen in-person learning in schools.
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Clearly, reopening schools during a pandemic is complicated.

Some decision-making may need to change based on new information about the virus or a surging number of cases in a community. Check state and local health department notices daily about transmission in your community and adjust your operations appropriately. Be prepared to return to virtual learning if needed, and to have online or distance learning as part of your curriculum. Schools have a special role in our communities, and their stewardship is important in this challenging time. We've created this playbook to provide a clinical perspective of current guidelines based on what we know about COVID-19 and how it is transmitted. This information is continuing to develop as scientists, physicians, and epidemiologists study it. Please continue to monitor the latest information and recommendations from trusted resources, like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health.

It is also complicated to provide useful guidance for a virus that we are still learning about.

What each school does is specific to its needs and circumstances. As understanding of COVID-19 and applicable guidelines are changing quickly, the information in this playbook is current as of the last update. These recommendations are not intended to supersede or replace the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, state Department of Health, Department of Education, Occupational Health & Safety Administration, or World Health Organization.

This Healthy Restart Playbook for Reopening Schools is part of the Healthy Restart Playbook (“Playbook”) and is intended for informational and educational purposes only. This Playbook should not be used as a replacement for medical or legal advice. Schools and employers are solely responsible for complying with all applicable legal requirements and making decisions regarding their operations, students, and employees based upon their individual circumstances. This Playbook is not intended as a substitute for following applicable federal, state, or local laws, regulations, or guidelines.

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Adherence to any recommendations included in this Playbook will not ensure successful results in every situation. Furthermore, the recommendations contained in this Playbook should not be interpreted as setting a standard of care, or be deemed inclusive of all proper methods of operations. There is no guarantee that following all of these recommendations will prevent transmission of COVID-19.
There are no easy answers.

COVID-19 spreads when people are together, as they are in schools. By applying the basic precautions listed below and explained throughout, schools can help reduce the risk to teachers, students, staff, and their families, if they choose to reopen in-person education:

**A**lways Wear a Mask

**B**e Aware of Illness Symptoms

**C**lean Your Hands and Your Space

**D**istance Physically, But Not Socially

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**PLAYBOOK CONTENT**

5 7 11 16 19 20

Key Planning Points How to Talk to Kids About COVID-19 Welcome to the New School Day The ABCDs of COVID-19 How to Properly Wear a Mask Wellness Tips
Assess the School Day
Reassess whether the school day will include the same activities and breaks as before. Eating, whether breakfast, snack, or lunch, is a particular challenge because it requires the removal of masks and can cause increased droplets to be released in the air. To space students as far apart as possible, consider eating outside or, if that’s not possible, in classrooms when half the class is at recess. You may consider limiting the school day so that eating is not done on site. We know that many children depend on schools for meals and that nutrition is of significant importance to their overall health, so we know that there may not be a clear solution to this problem. Other important activities, like physical education, sports, theater, and music, may pose challenges as well.

Monitor for Infections
Encourage teachers, staff, and administrators, as well as students and parents, to stay home if they have any COVID-19 symptoms. Schools may need to reevaluate attendance policies for both employees and students. The goal is to encourage everyone to follow public health guidelines for quarantines and to limit the spread of infection. This doesn’t ensure that a school is COVID-19–free, as current studies indicate the virus can still spread even if people don’t have symptoms. Requiring everyone to wear a mask can help. Schools may need to provide masks.

Evaluate Rotating Schedules
To maximize physical distancing at school, it may be advisable to limit the number of students on site by using rotating schedules. This may include online learning between days or weeks when students are designated to be at school. Kids should stay physically distant but still socially connected. If students are grouped into cohorts, it will limit the disruption if there are COVID-19 infections in a classroom or group and if quarantines are advisable for a class. If there’s enough time between cohorts, facilities can be aired out and deep-cleaned to optimize disinfecting. During the time between in-person learning for each cohort, students and teachers can assess if they are developing COVID-19 symptoms.

Communicate Frequently
Provide clear, up-to-date information to the community, parents, students, teachers, and staff. Schools serve an important role as a trusted resource for information. Develop policies for notifying families of infections. Evaluate interactions with parents, students, and administrators to allow for continued connections using virtual tools, mailed or emailed forms, in-class sign-up forms, and other ways to communicate without in-person interactions. Assess school calendars and procedures for restarting after school breaks.
Indoor Environment and Facilities
Try to get fresh air in the classrooms whenever possible, and optimize the ventilation system settings when fresh air is not possible. Open windows and doors, if safe to do so; filter air in the room or the building; and consider the use of portable HEPA filtration units. Verify that ventilation systems are operating at their maximum capacity and the filters are at minimum MERV 13 rating. Increase cleaning in common areas, focusing on high-traffic and smaller spaces as well as areas of high touch, such as door knobs, edges of doors where people use hands to open and close, and light switches. Select appropriate disinfectants that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has designated for use against SARS-CoV-2 and follow manufacturer specifications for application and contact time. When using disinfectant sprays, disposable paper towels are preferred over reusable towels.

Crowds Provide an Opportunity for COVID-19 to Spread
Reassess current procedures for coming to school, leaving school, meetings, assemblies, changing classes, lunch or snack, music and theater performances, sports games, and other times when students and their parents or school teachers and staff may be assembling in a crowd.

Consider Special Accommodations
Some students may not be able to wear a mask and may require non-distanced in-person services. Identify particular teachers and aides who may require personal protective equipment, like N95 respirators, to ensure they are able to be protected as they perform their job duties, so that you can procure a sufficient supply before school begins. Think through how these students can interact with classmates appropriately.

Be Prepared to Return to Virtual Learning If Needed
If there is a local surge in infections or another stay-at-home order, if students have to be quarantined because they have a family member who is sick, or if there are students or families who do not want to return to in-person school, have a plan to continue classwork for individual students and for the school. Encourage districts to share best practices and resources for online and distance learning to ensure education can continue when it is appropriate for in-person school to be suspended.
Masks are one of the most important defenses against the spread of the virus. If all people are masked, the risk of infection is less. It’s that simple. As masks become increasingly common, we are becoming more used to them. Even young children are embracing masks with animal faces and action heroes. Adults can wear fun masks too, such as ones with sparkles, cheerful designs, or faces/smiles.

It’s important to talk to students with age-appropriate reinforcement of some basic themes:

- **Reassure them** that together educators, parents, and students are creating a safe environment for everyone.
- **Be honest** about what’s happening, that we are taking these precautions while scientists all over the world are working toward effective treatments and vaccines.
- **Give students space to talk** about their feelings and, whenever possible, let them make choices. In uncertain times, even small choices will help them feel a sense of control or empowerment in their lives.
Very Young Children

Our experts are used to reassuring very young children that wearing a mask is part of what we are all doing right now, and the doctors and nurses they see in the hospital are wearing masks to keep everyone safe. Masked caretakers often wear a photo of their smiling face on their uniform so child patients can see what they look like without their mask. Adults can reinforce to children that wearing a mask is good, that it helps keep them, their friends, and family safe.

Getting children to keep masks on can be challenging, and there will be times when children take them off. In these circumstances, continue to model and encourage mask usage. Like wearing seat belts in cars, children will get more comfortable over time and it will get easier. For some children, a specific behavior plan for reinforcing wearing a mask might be necessary, just as other safe behaviors are reinforced at school and home. For some, graduated exposure to mask-wearing is helpful. This means that children will practice wearing a mask for longer and longer periods of time. Also, as schools have already been doing, continue to reinforce handwashing. Consider making a game of it—e.g., pick a class handwashing song. And, as possible, discourage students from sharing school supplies, food, and toys.
Elementary Schoolers may find wearing a mask either reassuring or scary. To help them adjust, make an art project out of decorating masks. Give them 6 feet of ribbon so they can measure things that are 6 feet long. Very importantly, keep an eye out for unusual behaviors: difficulty separating from parents, tearfulness in the morning or throughout the school day, trouble paying attention, aggressive behaviors, or acting younger than their age (like using baby talk). These may be signs that children are stressed or worried. Ask questions and use active listening.

Children’s fears may be based on what they see in the media. Exposure to media should be monitored by caregivers. Fear may be due to a relative or family friend who has COVID-19. It could also be due to stress from a family member who has lost a job or whose job involves potential exposures, like a grocery store cashier or first responder. Encourage students to talk about what makes them feel anxious. Reassure them that it’s okay to feel sad, upset, or worried, and let them know that you and others at the school are working hard to keep them safe.

It is important to remember that children who have experienced previous trauma may be at particular risk for increased anxiety associated with the pandemic. For children who have neurodevelopmental disorders, a social story may assist with explaining and helping the child to understand the importance of mask-wearing.
Older Students

Middle school and high school students can better understand the importance of masks and find ways to actively engage in helping to keep their community safe. Teens may also not be aware of or may deny their negative reactions. Encourage their involvement in engaging projects that help others in the community, like making masks or virtual tutoring of younger students, and personal projects like creating videos, artwork, or written works about supporting each other in the time of COVID-19.

Find ways to encourage discussions about COVID-19 and what they’re hearing on social media. Teens are being exposed to many different role models, including adults who are engaging in risky behaviors during this time. Listen to them about their views and allow them the opportunity to express themselves and to be heard. Finally, regularly express your pride in your students and how much they are doing during this difficult time to keep themselves, each other, and their communities safe.
HEALTHY RESTART PLAYBOOK
Welcome to the New School Day

How will you apply the principles of physical distancing, wearing masks, reducing high-touch points, cleaning hands, and getting outside air in the classrooms? What follows are suggestions. Be creative. Be thoughtful. Don’t be afraid to make something new and exciting out of the challenges at hand. It is recommended that schools use visuals of the new school-day routine and have reminders posted throughout the school about safety measures being taken.

Before You Leave Home
- Fill water bottles.
- Share information.
- Monitor for symptoms.

At School
- Temp check: a fever is 100.0°F or more.
- Desks at least 6 feet apart.
- Consider using a megaphone or microphone to project your voice to a large group. (Remember to disinfect between users.)

Pickup
- Stagger pickups and departures.
- Reassess security processes to limit exposure.

Lunch
- Checkerboard seating—outside if possible.

Front Office

Drinking Fountains
- Every other stall, every other sink.

Bathrooms
- Plexiglas between work spaces.

Lockers
- Stagger access to lockers to avoid crowding.

Class
- Block access or clean frequently.

Drinking Fountains
- Every other stall, every other sink.

Labs
- Plexiglas between work spaces.

Bathrooms
- Every other stall, every other sink.

Back at Home
- Wash hands thoroughly. Wash masks.
- Monitor for symptoms.

Mask Always On
- Consider using a megaphone or microphone to project your voice to a large group. (Remember to disinfect between users.)
Health Assessment

Consistent with the Ohio Department of Health guidance for Ohio schools, a two-part daily health assessment is key: one, a fever check and two, a symptom check. At home, a grown-up should check for symptoms (like cough, loss of smell or taste, sore throat, or shortness of breath) and fever. Temperatures should be taken before students enter the school building. Review symptoms with children to ensure that they can self-identify when they begin to feel ill. During the day at school, students should let a grown-up know if they feel sick or feel like they have a fever. For any concerns of fever, a temperature should be taken with a thermometer.

100.0°F or over is a fever in the COVID-19 world. Digital thermometers are fast, accurate, and no-touch. Offer sanitizer at the entry to the school. Stagger entry times or have multiple entrances where screeners are located that kids can use. If safely possible, keep the doors open as students arrive so no one has to touch them. Remember, not all people with COVID-19 have a fever or other symptoms, and yet they may be contagious. And not all fevers mean COVID-19.

Classes

Keep desks and chairs at least 6 feet apart and wipe them down between classes. Put decals on the floor to mark 6-foot distances in common spaces. Find storage space: removing desks and chairs from rooms is better than moving them to the side of the room. Reassign lockers so students won’t be so close to each other between classes. Block off work areas where you can’t stay distant or use Plexiglas shields between them for science labs. Don’t share equipment, if possible. If doing an experiment, you could assign a virtual partner to record data.
Nurse’s Office

Avoid using the nurse’s office for both possibly contagious COVID-19 patients and other nurse services, if possible. The nurse’s office or satellite location should be designated for kids to get their regular medications or for minor injuries.

Consistent with Ohio Department of Health guidance, there should be a designated space for kids with symptoms of COVID-19 to wait for their parents to pick them up. This space also may be used for those students who have positive results to the entry screening if they do not have a way to get home safely. Medical follow-up information should be available for the parents when they pick up their children with concerning symptoms.

The nurse’s office and COVID-specific space should be disinfected frequently. A school nurse who knows of a case of COVID-19 or suspects a case must comply with state law regarding the reporting of contagious or infectious diseases. Actual and suspected cases of COVID-19 may require a report to the local Department of Health.

Offices

Stay masked in teachers’ break rooms. We know it is hard to be in a mask all day, so try to set up a place where teachers can have a place to take mask breaks—outside or a space where they are away from others.

Limit in-person meeting sizes and the number of teachers in the break room at any one time. Do not use closely spaced rooms for eating. Place Plexiglas shields between workstations. Front offices should use Plexiglas barriers with an opening to slide documents through. Reassess what documents need to be turned in in-person. Any shared pens will need to be disinfected regularly. Do not use overhead and desk fans. If safely possible, open windows and doors to bring in fresh air.
**Lunch**

Eat in a safe outdoor area if possible. Consider staggered lunchtimes in large cafeterias to support distancing. It’s better to have more space around kids when they’re unmasked and eating. Checkerboard seating helps with distance.

Consider shortening school days to avoid lunch.

Consider using prepackaged utensils. Remove communal drink dispensers or put them on the list of high-touch surfaces to be cleaned frequently. End self-serve cafeteria lines. Have a gloved server fill each tray.

Ensure there is a process for all students and staff to use hand sanitizer or wash their hands before and after lunch.

**Bathrooms**

Tape every other urinal or stall to encourage physical distancing. Use paper towels rather than air dryers, which should be covered to avoid use, if possible. Spend time teaching children how to properly wash hands—turning on faucets is fine, as hands are washed right after, but turn them off with a paper towel. Soap and water for twenty seconds or two choruses of “Happy Birthday,” or using a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol are recommended. Post signs to remind everyone of the importance of handwashing and how to do it properly.
Ending the Day

Practice physical distancing in stairways; one-way stairs are not recommended for schools. **Stagger pickups.** Reassess school bus assignments, security procedures, and other sign-out processes.

When they get home, students should wash their hands and they can remove their masks. Teach students to remove cloth masks by the ear loops or strings **once at home** or in their cars. Fold the outside corners together, wash the masks nightly, and wash hands immediately after removing them.

Extracurricular Activities

The need to space and mask creates specific challenges for **music, band, choir, and drama.** Singing and brass and wind instruments are particularly problematic. Consider virtual or remote practice sessions. Performances outdoors with spacing may be possible. Microphones can be used to amplify voices of masked drama participants. Be aware that there is higher risk with these activities.

**In gym and sports,** the more exertion, the greater physical distance should be maintained, and outside is best. Choose activities with limited contact and equipment. Expending energy is even more important now, but ensure precautions are still in place. Mask where possible. Limit use of locker rooms. Use hand sanitizer before and after entering new spaces, especially the cafeteria, after recess, music, or gym. **In workout and weight rooms,** disinfect knobs, levers, and pieces of equipment between uses.

Consider new ways to experience sporting events and performances by other students, families, and the community. Rethink assemblies. **Large groups and crowds should be avoided if possible.**

Practice fire, tornado, and active-shooter drills one class at a time.
A mask covers the respiratory tract, where the droplets are produced. Face shields protect the eyes, where the virus can enter a person’s body. You can be infected with COVID-19 and infect others without experiencing any symptoms. Schools may need to have masks available for students, teachers, and staff to ensure everyone has one. It is not easy to keep the mask on and talk. Consider using a microphone to project your voice. Take mask breaks where you can be away from others and remove your mask. Encourage the use of “ear savers” if mask-wearing becomes painful for students, faculty or other employees.

Always Wear a Mask

Children with a fever or symptoms of COVID-19 need to be removed from the classroom. Children must be sent to a safe, well-ventilated area different from the school nurse’s office where they can wait and be masked and physically distanced from others. Parents should be called to pick up the child and take them home. Remind children not to wait to tell you if they are not feeling well. Talk with parents about your plans and make certain you have good contact numbers in case a child gets sick and needs to be picked up. Teachers and staff with symptoms of COVID-19 should not come to work.

Be Aware of Illness Symptoms

Wash your own hands frequently, even when not soiled. Institute regular times of the day when children sanitize hands. Teach students good hand hygiene and have simple, child-friendly signs to help guide them. Soap and water for twenty seconds or two choruses of “Happy Birthday,” or a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol are recommended. We do not recommend that teachers routinely wear rubber gloves. Remove soiled items from the classroom and set them aside for cleaning.

Clean Your Hands and Your Space

Stay 6 feet apart as much as possible. Physical closeness and time both increase exposure. Kids should stay physically distant but still socially connected. Activities using distance learning build community. For example, students can share a pet or play I Spy online with the class.

Distance Physically, But Not Socially

The understanding of COVID-19’s impact on children, including illnesses after the virus is no longer present, is still developing. Teachers, staff, and administrators, as well as students’ families, are also susceptible to COVID-19, and some may have risk factors identified as making them at risk for more severe illness if they get COVID-19.

*www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19
The ABCDs of COVID-19

We all produce droplets when we speak, cough, or sneeze. Even if you don’t feel sick, if you have the virus, it is spread as these microscopic particles fly through the air. Slowing the spread of these droplets is the basic rule behind all our safety precautions, starting with rule number one: if your child feels sick, keep them home.

A - Always Wear a Mask
A mask covers the mouth and nose, where the droplets that spread COVID-19 are made. Children can have COVID-19 and spread the illness even when they don’t feel sick. If your child sees you wear a mask, they will pick up on that and wear one, too. This also will make it easier for your child, as they will be used to wearing a mask when they go back to school. When you talk to your children about wearing a mask, let them know that wearing a mask is a way to take care of others, because if we all wear a mask, we can slow the spread in the community.

B - Be Aware of Illness Symptoms
Before your child leaves the house, check for fever and any COVID-19 symptoms. 100.0°F or over without any medicines is the cutoff for fevers. Keep your child home if they are having a fever or COVID-19 symptoms. Talk with your child so they know that you want them to let teachers know if they are not feeling well at school. Have a plan for what to do if you need to pick a child up during the day.

C - Clean Your Hands and Your Space
Teach good handwashing at home by washing hands together or talking about it with older children. Soap and water for twenty seconds or two choruses of “Happy Birthday,” or a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol are recommended. Talk with your child about being safe and not sharing items with other children right now.

D - Distance Physically, But Not Socially
Stay 6 feet apart as much as possible. Physical closeness increases exposure. Children can keep up with friends by phone or email, with adult supervision. This can be a stressful time for children. You may have family or friends with COVID-19. You may have family or friends who have lost their jobs recently. Be honest and share information in a way they can understand. Tell your child that it’s okay to be sad, mad, or worried. It can be hard for grown-ups to hear about stress that children are feeling because we don’t have all the answers. But listening to your child and answering their questions can help.
The ABCDs of COVID-19

A lways Wear a Mask
A mask covers the face, and that is where the droplets that spread COVID-19 come from. Wearing a mask is a way to take care of others because, if we all wear masks, we can slow the spread in the community.

B e Aware of Illness Symptoms
The grown-ups around you want to make sure they take good care of you. Let a grown-up, like your parent, teacher, or coach, know as soon as you think you may have a fever or if you are not feeling well. Don’t wait!

C lean Your Hands and Your Space
Soap and water for two choruses of “Happy Birthday” or a hand sanitizer. It’s hard to remember, but as much as possible, try not to touch things other people have touched.

D istance Physically, But Not Socially
Stay 6 feet apart as much as possible. You can keep up with friends by phone or email. These times are stressful. You or your friends may feel sad because you may know people who have COVID-19. Others are having a hard time because of a parent who has lost a job. It’s okay to be sad. Make sure to tell your teachers if you are feeling stressed or worried.

We all produce droplets when we speak, cough, or sneeze. Even if you don’t feel sick, if you have the virus, it is spread as these microscopic particles fly through the air. Slowing the spread of these droplets is the basic rule behind all our safety precautions, starting with rule number one: if you feel sick, stay home.
How to Properly Wear a Mask

Masks can be one of the most important defenses against the spread of the virus. If all people are masked, the risk of infection is lowered. Remember to wash or sanitize your hands before touching your mask.

1. Wash or sanitize your hands.
2. Make sure colored side of mask is facing out and stiff bendable edge is on top.
3. Holding ear loops, pull around ears.
4. Mold bendable edge to nose.
5. Expand mask to cover nose and chin.
6. Wash your hands again.
1. Establish a consistent and structured daily routine.
2. Set aside 5 to 10 minutes each day for special time. This involves letting the child lead the play. During this period of time, parents should use praise and avoid questions, criticisms, and commands.
3. Strengthen the family. Identify one day of the week that can be a family movie or game night.
4. Encourage daily exercise.
5. Use the time at home to promote exploration of new interests.
6. Use praise liberally.
7. Minor misbehavior such as whining can be ignored.
8. Consequences should be age-appropriate, predictable, and time-limited.
9. Each member of the family should have an individualized stress management plan.
10. Identify that this is a stressful time for everyone in the family. Stay patient and calm. This can be achieved by using relaxation strategies such as diaphragmatic breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and mindfulness. Apps can be used to assist with guided relaxation (e.g., Headspace).
11. Work on keeping a positive self-dialogue. Replace unhelpful thoughts with more helpful thoughts.
12. Keep an attitude of gratitude. Keep a daily journal where every member of the family identifies things they are grateful for.
13. Keep connections with family and friends. Feeling socially supported is critical.
14. If someone in the family has passed, identify positive memories and mementos to carry on the family member’s legacy.
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Posters to print and display at home or at school

How Nurses and Doctors Wash Their Hands

The ABCDs of COVID-19
HEALTHY RESTART PLAYBOOK

How Nurses and Doctors Wash Their Hands

1. Wet & Soap
2. Palms
3. Between Fingers
4. Back of Fingers
5. Thumbs
6. Fingernails
7. Wrists
8. Rinse & Dry
9. Use Towel to Turn Off Faucet & Open Door
The ABCDs of COVID-19

A - Always Wear a Mask
B - Be Aware of Illness Symptoms
C - Clean Your Hands and Your Space
D - Distance Physically, But Not Socially
Always Wear a Mask

Be Aware of Illness Symptoms

Clean Your Hands and Your Space

Distance Physically, But Not Socially
Always Wear a Mask
Illness Symptoms

Be Aware of

Fever

100.0°F
Clean Your Hands and Your Space
Distance Physically, But Not Socially