

# Family Education Sheet

## Home Care for Children Whose Parents or Caregivers May Have COVID-19



Boston Children's Hospital

View more health education materials at  
[www.bostonchildrens.org/familyeducation](http://www.bostonchildrens.org/familyeducation)

If a parent or caregiver has COVID-19 (from testing positive) or if their healthcare provider said they likely have it, here are some suggestions for preventing infection at home. We know that not all of these recommendations are possible for every family.

### What steps should my family take?



#### Stay at home and away from others

- We recommend that anyone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19:
  - **Self-isolate:** The sick family member should **stay home** and **keep away from other people** to lower the chance of spreading the illness.
  - **Try to stay in 1 room of the house:** Create a "sick room" for the person with symptoms to stay in until they feel better. If this isn't possible, they should **stay at least 6 feet (2 meters) away** from other people and pets in your house.
    - If more than 1 person in the home is sick, try to keep each person in their own sick room. If that's not possible, keeping sick family members together in one room is OK.
  - **Use a delivery or pick-up service for groceries**, or ask friends or family members to drop off groceries and supplies. Have them leave them outside to avoid direct contact.



#### Wear personal protective equipment and practice good hygiene

- **Choose one family member or friend who does not have symptoms to care for your child.** We know that isn't always possible.
  - If the parent or caregiver cannot self-isolate, they should **wear a facemask** when they're within 6 feet of other people. If you do not have a facemask, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that a bandana or scarf can offer limited protection.
- **Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow** and then **wash hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.** Any kind of soap is OK, including natural soap. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60-95% alcohol to clean your hands if soap and water aren't available.
- Everyone in the house should **avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth** unless they have just cleaned their hands.



#### Limit visitors to your home

- **Don't let anyone come inside your home unless they are needed.** This includes people like home health aides and nurses. This is because of the risk of asymptomatic (someone who has COVID-19 but has no symptoms) or pre-symptomatic (someone who has caught COVID-19 but has not shown any symptoms yet) sharing of the virus.
- **If caregivers must come into your home for your child's care, let them know that a person in your home may have COVID-19.** Caregivers should wear personal protective equipment, like gloves, eye protection and face masks.

### How can I reduce germs in my home?

- If possible, **the sick caregiver should use a separate bathroom** from other members of your household.
  - The sick person should clean the bathroom as much and as often as possible. This includes faucets, sink, toilets, surfaces and any other areas they touch or may cough or sneeze on.
  - Keep the toilet lid closed when flushing to prevent germs from spreading.
- **If the sick person is not able to clean**, then another member of the family should clean. They should wear a facemask and disposable gloves if possible.
  - You can use reusable household gloves if you do not have disposable gloves **but** make sure you use them only for COVID-19 cleaning from then on. Be sure to clean them well with soap and water after every time you use them.
  - If you don't have a facemask, the CDC says that a bandana or scarf can offer limited protection.

After cleaning:

- Remove disposable gloves and throw them away. If you are using reusable gloves, clean them well with soap and water.
- Wash hands right away with soap and water or use an alcohol-based sanitizer.
- Remove the facemask or face covering and throw it away or wash it.
- Wash your hands again with soap and water or use an alcohol-based sanitizer.
- **Don't share household items with anyone with COVID-19.** All used household items should be cleaned thoroughly after use, such as bedding and towels. Sick people should use their own tube of toothpaste and soap bar (if bar soap and not liquid is used).
- **The sick person should frequently clean commonly touched objects in their "sick room" and bathroom**, including door handles, toilets, faucets and electronic devices (phones, computers).

## How can I reduce germs in my home?

- **Another member of the family who doesn't have symptoms should clean** and disinfect commonly touched areas in the home (outside of the sick room).
- **Use a regular household cleaner or make your own disinfectant** by mixing 1 part bleach to 9 parts water.
- **Open windows and doors**, as weather allows, to keep air moving through your home.

## What if a breastfeeding parent has COVID-19?

- As of now, there is no evidence that the virus that causes COVID-19 spreads through breastmilk. Please talk to your pediatrician for the latest updates.
- If a breastfeeding parent has suspected or confirmed COVID-19, **breastfeeding can continue** but steps should be taken to avoid spreading the virus to the baby:
  - **Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds** before touching your baby. You may also use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60- 95% alcohol. Make sure to cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used if hands are visibly dirty.
  - **Wear a facemask.** If you do not have a facemask, the CDC says that a bandana or scarf can offer limited protection.

## If you are expressing or pumping breastmilk

All germs, including COVID-19, can get into pumped breast milk. That is why it's important to take these precautions:

- **Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds** before touching pump or bottle parts and clean all parts after each use. You may also use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that has 60- 95% alcohol.
- **Make sure your breast pump collection kit is clean.** Wash with warm, soapy water after each use, and then rinse it with clear water. Let it air-dry away from other dishes and family. Sanitize your kit at least once daily with a microwave steam bag, by boiling in a pot on the stove, or in the dishwasher (Sani-cycle).
- **Avoid coughing or sneezing on the breast pump collection kit and the milk storage containers.** COVID-19 spreads through tiny droplets released when coughing, sneezing and breathing.
- **Clean the outside of the breast pump** before you use it with a disinfecting wipe that kills germs.

**If possible, express/pump breastmilk and have a family member who is not sick feed the baby.**

## When can home isolation end?

In general, most people with COVID-19 can leave home when these 3 things have happened:

- They have had no fever for at least 24 hours without the use of medicine that reduces fevers **and**
  - Other symptoms have improved, such as cough or shortness of breath **and**
  - At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared\*
- \*In some cases, for people with severe illness or immune system problems, 20 days need to pass since symptoms first appeared.

## How can I talk to my child about COVID-19?

It can be scary and confusing for children of all ages when their parent or caregiver is sick. It's important that you or a loved one talk to your child to support them.

- **For toddlers and pre-school age children:** Reassure your child that their loved one still loves and cares about them very much. While a parent or caregiver is isolated, consider ways to stay connected, such as using video technology like ZOOM or FaceTime.
- **For older children:** Speak calmly and reassuringly. Say that most people who get COVID-19 feel like they have a cold or the flu. Tell them that their parent or caregiver is wearing a mask or isolating to keep everyone safe and healthy. Reassure your child that it's OK to be scared and encourage them to share their fears. Give them tasks like washing their hands or cleaning a common space (under supervision) to help them feel in control.

## What are some resources for my family?

*Please note: This list is not all-inclusive and resources may change.*

### Massachusetts-based resources

#### Massachusetts 211

Mass 2-1-1 is an easy to remember telephone number that connects callers to information about critical health and human services available in the community. It's available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you are unable to reach 2-1-1, you can call 1-877-211-MASS (6277). Hearing impaired callers can call 508-370-4890 TTY.

### Food resources

#### The Greater Boston Food Bank

The Greater Boston Food Bank partners with 520+ hunger-relief agencies in Eastern Massachusetts.

Call: 617-427-5200

[gbfb.org/need-food](http://gbfb.org/need-food)

## Food resources

### FoodSource Hotline

To find food resources in your community, call 1-800-645-8333 TTY 1-800-377-1292

Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 7 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

[projectbread.org/get-help/foodsource-hotline.html](http://projectbread.org/get-help/foodsource-hotline.html)

## Financial support

### United Way Massachusetts COVID-19 Family Support Fund

<https://unitedwaymassbay.org/get-involved/covid-19-family-fund/>

For general questions about the COVID-19 Family Support Fund, please email [info@supportunitedway.org](mailto:info@supportunitedway.org)

## Transportation

### Ridematch

A searchable directory of public, private and accessible transportation options in Massachusetts.

<https://massridematch.org/>

## Emotional support

### Parental Stress Line

Need someone to talk to? This service is free and confidential, 24/7.

Call: 1-800-632-8188

### NAMI Helpline:

The National Alliance on Mental Illness provides advocacy, education, support and public awareness.

If you're in a crisis, call: 1-800-950 6264 or text "NAMI" to 741741.

### How to Cope With Anxiety Related to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

This website suggests ways how to cope with stress during the pandemic. It's appropriate for families and providers.

[verywellmind.com/managing-coronavirus-anxiety-4798909](http://verywellmind.com/managing-coronavirus-anxiety-4798909)

### Free Online Guided Meditation:

[meditationmuseum.org/](http://meditationmuseum.org/)

## Sources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): If You Are Sick or Caring for Someone [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html)
- CDC: COVID-19 and Breastfeeding [cdc.gov/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-special-circumstances/maternal-or-infant-illnesses/covid-19-and-breastfeeding.html](https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-special-circumstances/maternal-or-infant-illnesses/covid-19-and-breastfeeding.html)
- KidsHealth: Understanding Coronavirus <https://kidshealth.org/en/parent/s/coronavirus-landing-page.html>
- ZerotoThree: Answering Your Young Child's Questions About Coronavirus [zerotothree.org/resources/3265-answering-your-young-child-s-questions-about-coronavirus](https://zerotothree.org/resources/3265-answering-your-young-child-s-questions-about-coronavirus)

Scan QR codes with your phone camera



## For more information

If you're a Boston Children's patient or family member and you have questions general questions about COVID-19, please call our COVID-19 hotline at 855-281-5730 or 617-355-4200.

Scan QR codes with your phone camera

Visit Boston Children's COVID-19 website:

[childrenshospital.org/conditions-and-treatments/conditions/c/coronavirus](http://childrenshospital.org/conditions-and-treatments/conditions/c/coronavirus)



Visit the CDC website:

[cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)



*This Family Education Sheet is available in [Arabic](#), [Spanish](#) and [Chinese Simplified](#).*