

How to help your children stay safe, healthy and active while schools are closed

Your child's school may have been closed as part of an effort to keep our community safe during the COVID-19 pandemic but parents still need to work and children still need to stay active, engaged and entertained. A good way to do this is to have small groups of children play and study together.

Here are some guidelines for hosting safe gatherings among children and parents outside of the school setting.

First, some basic information to keep everyone healthy:

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, fatigue, cough, and aches. The illness can progress to shortness of breath and complications from pneumonia. Symptoms may also include nausea with vomiting and diarrhea. Although children seem to be the least likely to develop symptoms, they still need to avoid close contact with others, especially vulnerable people.

If anyone in your family, including your child, is sick, keep them at home and separate from the rest of your family as much as possible.

If you have any of these symptoms, please stay home and call your doctor. If you have a fever or cough put on a mask before going to the doctor. Let them know your symptoms when you call.

If you need to see a healthcare provider and don't have insurance, call Valley Connections at 1-888-334-1000. If you are experiencing a medical emergency call 911.

If you are over 60, have a chronic medical condition, or pregnant put your own health first. Refrain from taking care of other people's children if possible.

Social distancing helps slow down the spread of disease. Social distancing means staying 6 feet or at least an arm's length away from others.

Some simple hygiene habits will reduce the spread of the disease. Make sure your children:

Cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash their hands.

Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (enough time to sing the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice). Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

Avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

Don't share food, water bottles, utensils or cups.

If you bring a group of children together to play or provide childcare:

Limit the number of families involved to reduce the spread of illness spreading between multiple families in a community.

Keep the group small. Try to include no more than 10 children at a time.

Ask families to take their children's temperature before gathering and not to come if they have a fever (above 100.4F), coughing, or shortness of breath, or are otherwise unwell.

Frequently clean high-touch surfaces, like doorknobs, toys, and computers. Everyday cleaning products are effective against COVID-19.

Practice social distancing measures by keeping groups small, playing games that don't involve lots of touching or sharing toys and make sure they wash their hands frequently whenever possible.

Outdoor gatherings are less risky than indoors ones since COVID-19 spreads more easily when people are close together in confined spaces. Going to the park or taking a walk is a great option when caring for a group of children.

What about activities for older children and teens?

Older children and teens who are symptom-free and without underlying health conditions can get together with small groups of friends at a time (again, the lower the number the lower the risk). Low-contact, outdoor activities, like hiking and bike riding, are great ways for teens to socialize.

They should avoid spending time in groups larger than 10 and crowded places, like parties, retail spaces, and movie theaters.

Are gatherings safe for children with preexisting health conditions?

Children and teens with chronic health issues and immune compromising conditions should check with their healthcare provider before participating in a shared childcare arrangement or gathering.

What if someone in our gathering develops symptoms? Does my child need to quarantine?

If the symptomatic person isn't a confirmed case of COVID-19, your child does not need to quarantine, but you should monitor for symptoms. If your child develops a fever, coughing, or shortness of breath, separate them from others and call your healthcare provider.

If the symptomatic person is a confirmed COVID-19 case, your child and anyone else who's had close contact with the case should quarantine for 14 days, monitor symptoms, and notify your healthcare provider if symptoms develop.

You can find additional information at these links:

- **Santa Clara County Public Health Website** <http://sccphd.org/coronavirus>

- **Santa Clara County Public Health Facebook** <https://www.facebook.com/sccpublichealth/>
- **Santa Clara County Public Health Instagram** @scc_publichealth
- **Santa Clara County Public Health Twitter** @HealthySCC
- **Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Coronavirus COVID-19 Information**
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV
- **California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Coronavirus COVID-19 Information**
www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019
- **World Health Organization (WHO) Coronavirus COVID-19 Information**
www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019