



American Academy of Pediatrics
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN
Georgia Chapter

The Pediatrician's Toolkit for School Re-Entry and Children's Health in the Time of COVID-19



Prepared by the School Health Committee, Georgia Chapter of the
American Academy of Pediatrics

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School Health Committee, Georgia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Introduction

COVID-19 has impacted the health, physical, mental, and social, and economy of the world. School reopenings will present challenges (continued physical distancing, monitoring the health of students and school staff, etc.) that cannot be managed by school districts alone. It will take the entire community, working alongside school systems, to provide guidance and resources to keep students, teachers, school administrators and staff, and families safe and secure. The pediatrician's role is critical in providing knowledge about the spread and symptomology of this virus, especially as it pertains to children, and in developing strategies to reduce transmission, monitor outbreaks, and minimize anxiety within the school setting.

The Georgia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics' School Health Committee has developed a toolkit that can serve as a template for how the pediatrician can become involved in school re-openings. It includes:

- Sample introductory letter to send to local superintendents expressing an interest in participating in the planning and implementation of school reopenings.
- Sample handout for patients emphasizing the importance of reconnecting with pediatricians during this crisis.
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
- Resources for the pediatrician

We hope you find this toolkit helpful. Please contact us @ vjohn01@emory.edu with suggestions or comments for future updates.

Sample Introduction Letter

This can be sent or emailed to the superintendent of schools in your county.
(A complete list of Georgia's school district superintendents (by county) is in the Resource section.)

Date:

Dear Superintendent_____,

My name is Dr. _____ and am a practicing pediatrician in _____.
The challenge of reopening schools during COVID-19 is a daunting task and requires the support of the entire community.

I am offering my support and would like to assist in the planning and implementation of school re-entry. In addition to the challenges of ramping up to resume educational instruction and providing physical distancing for students and staff, you will be tasked with addressing the physical, emotional and social needs of everyone in the schools, especially the students. I am offering my help in developing policies and procedures and providing resources for you, your staff and the families you serve.

These are truly 'the times that try men's souls'. It is my intent to help lighten the load. Please let me know how I might be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Patient Flyer

Why your child needs a visit to the doctor this summer!

Connecting with your healthcare provider for a well check or sick visit seems so scary and unnecessary in a time when we are all trying to minimize risk of infection. But there are some very important reasons why it is vital to stay connected, especially for your children.

1. The better your child's baseline health, the better they will be able to fight any infection or stressor that comes their way.

Well child checks allow you to go over all aspects of your child's physical and emotional wellbeing. We have been working tirelessly to create ways to safely communicate with your family and minimize in-person time in the office. We have changed the office environment to comply with social distancing rules and are deep cleaning multiple times a day to keep you safe. Call us to find out your options.

2. It is vital that your child's vaccines are up to date.

Vaccine-preventable illnesses like flu and measles not only make you feel miserable when you have them, they also rob your immune system of the ability to fight other infections, including COVID-19. Flu vaccines are especially important if there is a "second wave" of COVID-19 during flu season this fall.

3. Chronic medical conditions like asthma, allergies or diabetes must be optimally managed so that your child's baseline health is the best that it can be.

Having a plan in place for when your child is well and sick will make a big difference in how their body is able to fight illnesses.

4. While distance learning has been important in keeping our children connected to their incredible teachers and education, it has also created challenges for children who need the vibrant school environment to thrive.

Children with learning differences, focus-related issues or other disabilities miss services that help learning. Touching base with your pediatrician over the summer will allow you to create a plan with your child's school to best help them succeed.

5. Physical distancing, social isolation, and child and family stressors during this crisis are greatly affecting the mental health of children and their caretakers.

Loss of caretaker jobs and income, lack of food, unstable housing and other stressors have impacted the social and emotional health of children. Many families are on edge. Children need mental health screenings and treatment in order to address all the factors affecting their overall well-being.

We want to help your child thrive. Call us @ (phone number here) to make a plan that works for your family!

More great information is available at healthychildren.org

<https://healthychildren.org/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Is-it-OK-to-call-the-pediatrician-during-COVID-19-even-if-I-m-not-sure-my-child-is-sick.aspx>

FAQs for Pediatricians

This is an ever-changing environment, with constantly fluctuating answers to very complex questions. The responses below are not rigid but are subject to change on a daily basis, requiring some flexibility as our knowledge increases.

What might my role be as a pediatrician in school reopenings?

- Serve as COVID-19 content experts
- Communicate school re-entry best practices to families and school districts
- Help families keep up to date on immunizations
- Assist in preparing children with special needs to return to school or obtain school services
- Provide surveillance and treatment of child/adolescent illness
- Provide or refer for COVID-testing
- Assist with information about PPE
- Provide information about cleaning and disinfecting in the school setting
- Provide mental health screenings/treatment/referrals

Is it safe to send a child back to school?

There are national and state guidelines on how to safely reopen schools that minimize health threats to students and school staff. There is always a risk for contracting and spreading the virus once you engage with others within the community. Safeguards are in place to minimize the risk (physical distancing, good hand hygiene, wearing masks when feasible, monitoring for illness, testing and contact tracing, etc.). None of the recommendations are mandatory and every school district has the flexibility to implement findings based on resources and prevalence of COVID in the community. It is also important to consider the disadvantages of NOT being in school.

Refer to:

COVID – 19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for school re-entry

<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

CDC School Reopening Decision Tree

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/Schools-Decision-Tree.pdf>

CDC updated guidelines for school reopenings

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>

GA DOE and DPH – Pathway for school reopening

https://www.georgiainsights.com/uploads/1/2/2/2/122221993/georgias_k-12_recovery_plan.pdf

CDC guidelines on disinfecting

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>

Does a child need to wear a mask at school?

Masks may be recommended but are not generally mandated. Depends on school district and prevalence of COVID in the community. Also based on age: younger children likely will not be asked to wear a mask.

Recommendations about children wearing masks at school change.

Refer to:

CDC guidelines K-12 and childcare. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools-faq.html>

COVID – 19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for school re-entry

<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

FAQs for Pediatricians...cont.

An article to consider: https://epaper.ajc.com/popovers/dynamic_article_popover.aspx?guid=3e149b32-7254-4ba2-9f1f-877871f32227&pbid=8e0858ee-1443-484d-9e94-f8b8a1eaaaff&utm_source=app.pagesuite&utm_medium=app-interaction&utm_campaign=pagesuite-epaper-html5_share-article

How do I approach testing in children – symptomatic or asymptomatic?

Refer to:

COVID -19 Testing Info: GA DPH

<https://gema.georgia.gov/covid-19-testing-info>

CHOA – COVID-19 testing;

<https://www.choa.org/medical-services/wellness-and-preventive-care/covid19-testing>

The above link answers questions related to testing strategy for children as of June 16, 2020 and has a comprehensive list of CHOA and alternate testing sites

General Testing Information:

- Remember: No COVID-19 diagnostics are FDA-approved: Only Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) Policy for Diagnostic Tests for COVID-19
- RT-PCR tests- assesses for active disease (preferred test for COVID-19 diagnosis)
- No serology tests (Antibody) have been approved by FDA for diagnostic purposes; generally reserved for assessing prevalence
- Supplies of tests increasing, but testing still limited, and in many areas, still prioritizing (not widespread or universal)
- Although not all kits have same specificity and sensitivity, please keep the following in mind:
Rapid tests (POC) are generally not reliable due to higher than acceptable false positive/negative rates.
RT-PCR (through LabCorp and Quest) –involving nasal route (not saliva) are generally reliable and have been validated

Should I test every child with a fever?

Not necessarily. A difficult decision for the pediatrician. Depends on associated symptoms, history of exposure, family risk factors, etc. As of June 16, 2020 – testing criteria for adults and children are the same.

CDC testing protocol. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/testing-overview.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Fclinical-criteria.html

Where do I get testing kits?

Reach out to the commercial labs directly (e.g., LabCorp, Quest) and explain your practice' situation. They may send you a small number until you regularly return swabs to them to run. You can also reach out to the DPH and CHOA for testing sites if you do not have sufficient PPE or testing supplies to do the tests yourself.

What should I tell parents about the symptoms of COVID in children?

Refer to: CDC COVID guidelines for Pediatricians, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/pediatric-hcp.html>

FAQs for Pediatricians...cont.

What should I tell parents about the Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children?

Refer to: Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome in Children: MIS-C – CDC guidelines for parents, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/children/mis-c.html>

What should I tell parents about summer activities and camps?

Refer to: AAP guidance to families and pediatricians on camp attendance during COVID-19. <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/guidance-for-families-and-pediatricians-on-camp-attendance-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

What should I tell parents about activities such as athletics, marching band and chorus in school?

Refer to: Guidelines for Opening up School Athletics, NFHS https://nfhs.org/media/3812287/2020-nfhs-guidance-for-opening-up-high-school-athletics-and-activities-nfhs-smac-may-15_2020-final.pdf

Guidelines for Marching Bands: NFHS
<https://www.nfhs.org/media/3812337/2020-nfhs-guidance-for-returning-to-high-school-marching-band-activities.pdf>

What should I tell parents about children with chronic diseases in school?

Plans should be based on individual circumstances and discussed with the pediatrician/specialists involved in daily care.

Refer to: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/groups-at-higher-risk.html#immunocompromised>

What are the resources for stress and trauma management for children and families during this pandemic?

Refer to: CDC's guideline for Helping Children Cope <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/for-parents.html>

CHOA's guideline for coping:
<https://www.strong4life.com/en/news/figuring-out-your-family-s-covid-19-reentry-plan>

An autism resource that has helpful interventions for all children and young adults
<https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/sites/afirm.fpg.unc.edu/files/covid-resources/Supporting%20Individuals%20with%20Autism%20through%20Uncertain%20Times%20Article%20Only.pdf>

Behavioral Health Impacts after COVID-19 Shelter-at-Home Orders: What to Expect and Ways to Prepare for the Return to School (Teacher and Administrative levels).

Refer to: <https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/workgroups/SMART%20Center%20Return%20to%20School%206.2.20%20final.pdf>

Resources

These can also be posted on social media:

List of Georgia's school district superintendents (by county)

<https://archives.gadoe.org/findaschool.aspx?contacts=ALL>.

Guidelines for return to school from the American Academy of Pediatrics

[COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Return to In-person Education in Schools](#)

Is it Safe to Send My Child To Childcare?

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Is-it-safe-to-send-my-child-to-child-care-during-COVID-19.aspx>

CDC COVID guidelines for Pediatricians

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/pediatric-hcp.html>

Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome in Children: MIS-C – CDC guidelines for parents

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/children/mis-c.html>

CDC updated guidelines for school reopening

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>

CDC School Reopening Decision Tree

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/Schools-Decision-Tree.pdf>

Georgia's DOE and DPH – Path to school reopening

https://www.georgiainsights.com/uploads/1/2/2/2/122221993/georgias_k-12_recovery_plan.pdf

AAP Healthy Children – Is it OK to call the pediatrician during COVID-19 even if my child isn't sick?

<https://healthychildren.org/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Is-it-OK-to-call-the-pediatrician-during-COVID-19-even-if-Im-not-sure-my-child-is-sick.aspx>

Behavioral Health Impacts after COVID-19 Shelter-at-Home Orders: What to Expect and Ways to Prepare for the Return to School (Teacher and Administrative levels)

An excellent resource for pediatricians on school reopening in general, with particular attention to behavioral health.

<https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/workgroups/SMART%20Center%20Return%20to%20School%206.2.20%20final.pdf>

Guidelines for Opening Up High School Athletics – National Federation of State High School Association/ Sports Medicine Advisory Committee

https://nfhs.org/media/3812287/2020-nfhs-guidance-for-opening-up-high-school-athletics-and-activities-nfhs-smac-may-15_2020-final.pdf

AAP Guidance for families and pediatricians on camp attendance during COVID-19

<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/guidance-for-families-and-pediatricians-on-camp-attendance-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

CDC's guideline for Helping Children Cope

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/for-parents.html>

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