As news continues to develop around COVID-19, the impact of the virus on children is an understandable concern. 98point6® Director of Pediatrics Jud Heugel, MD shares what we currently know, so you can make the most informed decisions for your family.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19 in kids? While in general it’s similar to what we see in adults, children tend to have milder symptoms (resembling a common cold or low-grade flu) such as fever, runny nose and cough. Others may include:

- Tiredness
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath
- Body aches
- Headaches
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Occasionally more severe illness, like pneumonia

What about the possible COVID-19-related syndrome that’s affecting some children? In rare cases, some children are experiencing a systemic inflammatory condition similar to Kawasaki disease with fever, eye redness and an unusual rash on the body (including the extremities). Currently being referred to as Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C), this can occur without the usual respiratory symptoms and in children who have recovered from a previous COVID-19 infection. If your child is experiencing any of the above, start a visit with us or contact your pediatrician to see if testing for COVID-19 or an in-person evaluation is appropriate.

Right now, emotions are running high, whether you’re dealing with meltdowns at home or navigating the latest rumors on social media. Remember to take a deep breath when you can, rely only on the most trusted sources of information and stay focused on the facts.

—Jud Heugel, MD
Where and when does my child need to wear a mask?
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends everyone over the age of 2 wear face coverings in public. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), if children can be kept at least 6 feet from others outside the household and not be in contact with surfaces that could harbor the virus, a mask is not needed to protect themselves and others. For example, masks are probably not necessary if your family is hiking on a fairly isolated trail or siblings are playing together in the backyard. However, if kids are likely to encounter people at a closer range (a well-visit at the doctor or a trip to the grocery store), a mask is advised. Children of any age with signs of illness should always remain home.

Why can't children under 2 wear masks? How can I protect my infant or toddler?
For kids this age, masks are a suffocation, choking and strangulation hazard, so keeping them home is best practice. If that can’t be avoided, cover the carrier or carriage loosely with a blanket so they can be protected but still able to breathe comfortably.

Can my children play with friends?
This is a difficult decision that hurts parents emotionally as much as it hurts kids. In this uncertain time, the best advice is to look at the facts: Since the virus can be transmitted before you know you’re sick (even if you have no symptoms), maintaining physical distance from people outside of the household is still the best measure to stop the spread. This means avoiding shared surfaces like playground equipment or games like tag. As some children head back to school, this dynamic will be harder to manage, and anxiety is to be expected. It’s every parent’s responsibility to make sure the school is following necessary safety protocols.

Should we avoid the pediatrician’s office altogether? What about well visits?
While the concern around them contracting COVID-19 is understandable, the AAP strongly supports continuation of well-child visits, and vaccinations should still be a priority. Delays put children at risk for illnesses like measles and they disturb the “herd immunity” that further protects others. Clinics have precautions in place to reduce exposure risk, and you should feel empowered to inquire about any concerns you have prior to arriving.

Stay informed
For the most up-to-date information on COVID-19, visit websites for The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and follow them on social media.

We’re Here for You
Text-based care enables you to avoid unnecessary exposure while providing trusted guidance and peace of mind. If you’re on a sponsored plan, 98point6 can help with these questions and concerns for both you and your family members ages 1+.