



“ The decision of whether to send children back to the classroom is a very personal one. If you have decided to send your kids back in-person, here are some facts and tips to keep in mind.

—Jud Heugel, MD
98point6 Director of Pediatrics

The New Back-to-School Not a Textbook Year

With only a few short months left to go, some parents have opted their child in for the final semester and some schools are re-opening for the first time. If your situation fits into one of these categories, it's natural to feel anxious, but there are some encouraging statistics.

Emerging data show that children are **very low spreaders**—so low, in fact, that in-school transmission is far less than that of adjacent communities.

A study found that **90,000 children in North Carolina** began attending in-person school in August 2020. Over a nine-week period there were only 773 COVID-19 infections (.008%) and no cases of child-to-adult transmission were reported in school.

CDC Support

The CDC now recommends a layered mitigation approach to bringing K–12 students safely back to in-person learning. The new guidance includes:

- ✓ Masking
- ✓ Physical distancing
- ✓ Hand-washing
- ✓ Cleaning and maintaining of healthy facilities
- ✓ Efficient contact tracing
- ✓ Encouragement of states to prioritize vaccinating teachers and school staff

The Upside of Germ Exposure

Once children return to the classroom, **parents will begin to see an uptick in regular infections**, such as the common cold, especially after a year in isolation.

This is actually a good thing, according to the “hygiene hypothesis,” which theorizes that children who are not exposed to enough infectious illnesses go on to develop autoimmune diseases at higher rates. So sitting next to germier classmates—even six feet apart—isn't all bad and ultimately proves beneficial to the immune system.

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We're Here for You

At home or on-the-go, if you're experiencing any medical concerns or simply feel the need to connect with a primary care physician, our virtual clinic is available 24/7 from wherever you are.



What You Can Do

Remaining Remote?

When school is in session, make sure you're working in a separate room or simply move out of listening range to protect your own well-being and stress levels.

As weather improves, make an effort to keep kids social outside. Physically distant activities that will get them moving with friends can include **charades, potato sack races, noodle tag and scavenger hunts.**

And if you or the kids need medical attention for something as ordinary as a sinus infection, pink eye or a rash, a 98point6 physician is available on-demand to diagnose, treat and order prescriptions anytime of the day or night.*

Preparing for the Big Day

If your child is returning this spring, be ready for a mix of excitement and anxiety. **Talk honestly about what they might expect and how they may feel in a way that normalizes their emotions, good or bad.**

And no matter how nervous *you* are—which is completely understandable—put on a brave face and empower them with a sense of confidence and positivity. They'll follow your lead.

Rally Support

We all feel the weight of powerlessness, but there are ways to take charge to benefit the health and safety of your family—and the greater community. **Contact school leaders and ask what supplies they may need.** The media is filled with optimistic stories of parents banding together to fundraise for classroom air purifiers or help install plexiglass desk shields. Just starting the conversation makes a difference.

Every Shot Counts

While the timeline for kids receiving the COVID-19 vaccine remains unknown, a study found that the administration of other essential childhood vaccines has dramatically dropped as a result of the pandemic. The CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics **strongly recommend that every child continue receiving the routine schedule of vaccinations,** as well as see their pediatrician for annual well-child visits.



A Source You Can Trust

This resource was put together with help from 98point6 board-certified physicians and health experts, as well as the latest findings from the Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Learn more at:

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2021/03/23/peds.2020-048090>

https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6919e2.htm?s_cid=mm6919e2_w

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