

# COVID-19 GUIDANCE: Lower Your Family's Risk



*With school back in session, parents and caregivers are having to make important decisions on how to protect their families from COVID-19. Since not everyone is able to be vaccinated, you may have concerns about how to keep your family safe; especially if your family has children under the age of 12 or other unvaccinated members. Here are some things to consider.*

## Keep Your Child Home If They are Sick

- Staying home when sick helps keep COVID-19 infections out of schools and child care programs and prevents the spread to others. **IF YOUR CHILD IS SICK OR HAS SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19 THEY SHOULD STAY HOME.** Symptoms of COVID-19 can include:

- |                                    |                            |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| ○ Fever (at least 100.4 degrees F) | ○ Muscle pain              |
| ○ Cough                            | ○ Sore throat              |
| ○ Shortness of breath              | ○ Fatigue                  |
| ○ Chills                           | ○ Congestion or runny nose |
| ○ Headache                         | ○ Loss of taste or smell   |

Other less common symptoms may include gastrointestinal symptoms like:

- |            |            |
|------------|------------|
| ○ Nausea   | ○ diarrhea |
| ○ Vomiting |            |

- Call your child's healthcare provider for testing information and recommendations for care.
- Contact your childcare provider and school to report symptoms and positive COVID-19 test results.
- Follow recommendations for when to quarantine or isolate.

## What is your family's vaccination status?

- Getting vaccinated is the best thing you can do to prevent getting or spreading COVID-19. Everyone age 12 and older can, and are encouraged, to get vaccinated including pregnant and breastfeeding women.
- After receiving your final COVID-19 vaccine dose, it takes about 14 days for your body to build up protection.
- Getting vaccinated not only protects you but helps you from spreading the virus to others.
- Once vaccinated, you are less likely to get sick, even with the Delta variant, and the illness is usually mild to moderate. Vaccines greatly reduce the chance of hospitalization and death.

## Mask Up

- To maximize protection and prevent spreading COVID-19, especially the Delta variant, everyone, regardless of vaccination status, should wear a mask indoors in areas of high transmission. This is especially important if:
  - You are indoors in public places or crowded outdoor settings
  - Are in an area of high transmission. (*Meeker County has a high transmission rate.*)
  - If you have a weakened immune system or are at increased risk for severe disease
  - If you live or interact with someone who is immunocompromised

## Talk with teachers, child care providers, & others who care for or spend time with your family

Become familiar with the necessary steps they take to protect your children in their care.

- Ask for their support to encourage your child to wear a mask indoors or in spaces where it is hard to stay 6 feet away from others.
- Let teachers and caregivers know, as appropriate, if your child or someone they live with has an underlying medical condition or a weakened immune system.
- Pack an extra mask in your child's backpack. If your child is old enough, ask if your child can bring hand sanitizer from home to use when they cannot wash their hands with soap and water.

### **Wash. Wash. Wash Your Hands**

- Teach your children the importance of washing hands. Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and sing aloud, the "Happy Birthday" song
- Use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol to clean your hands.
- Teach children when to wash hands:
  - After touching their eyes, nose, or mouth, blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing
  - After touching their mask
  - When going to and leaving daycare, school, and other public places
  - After touching items or surfaces that are frequently touched by other people such as door handles, tables, toys, and shopping carts
  - Before, during and after preparing or eating food
  - Before and after being near or caring for someone who is sick
  - After using the toilet or changing diapers

### **Help your children and family members cope**

Children may worry about themselves, their family, and friends getting sick with COVID-19. They may feel anxious about returning to school, childcare, or other activities. Working together with teachers, childcare providers, family members and other trusted adults can help your child make sense of what they hear.

- Make yourself available to listen and to talk. Let children know they can come to you when they have questions. Answer questions honestly and share facts about COVID-19 in a way that your child can understand.
- Reassure your child that they are safe.
- Let them know it is okay if they feel upset. Share with them examples of positive ways you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Teach your children and other family members everyday actions to reduce the spread of germs and role model these behaviors
- Take steps to protect you and your family's mental health
  - Keep up with regular routines
  - Find safe ways to keep your family connected with friends and other family members
  - Teach your family healthy coping skills by modeling them yourself. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well.

*For additional guidance visit:*

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/index.html>

Meeker County Public Health at (320)693-5370

