

# Protecting Seniors from COVID-19 as Students Return to School



School districts across the nation have begun to release their plans for re-opening in the fall. These plans include classes taught completely in-person, completely online, and hybrid models in which students are taught in-person for some but not all days of the week. While deliberations have focused largely on students, teachers, and other school staff, little consideration has been given to the risk of exposing seniors to COVID-19.

Kaiser Family Foundation recently reported that nearly 6% of people age 65 or older, nearly 3.3 million people, lived in a household with a school-age child (ages 5-18) in 2018.[i] With approximately 80% of seniors having at least one chronic disease[ii] this translates into more than 2.6 million seniors who both have a chronic disease and live with school-age children.

The CDC has reported that the risk of experiencing serious illness from COVID-19 increases steadily as you age, with the greatest risk for severe illness affecting those 85 and older. Eight out of 10 COVID-19 deaths reported nationally have been among adults 65 and older. This is not altogether surprising as older adults are more likely to have multiple health issues in life, and underlying health conditions are a huge driver of complications that arise from COVID-19. As both age and underlying medical conditions increase risk for serious illness from COVID-19, we offer the following guidance for seniors living with school-aged children.

## All people living with school-aged children should:



Clean and disinfect high touch-surfaces daily in household common areas such as:

- Tables or desks
- Hard-backed chairs
- Doorknobs and light switches
- Remotes and handles
- Toilets and sinks



When cleaning and disinfecting, use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection, then use a household disinfectant.



Launder items, including washable toys as needed, using the manufacturer's settings. Use the warmest appropriate water settings and dry items completely.



Make sure that children are up to date on well-child visits and immunizations.



Limit in-person playtime with other children, and instead connect virtually. The more people that children interact with and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread.



Monitor your health and your children's health daily—be alert for symptoms and take temperature daily if symptoms develop.

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If the senior is at higher risk it is recommended that the children in their home should:



Wear a cloth face covering over their nose and mouth in public settings where it is difficult to practice social distancing.



Frequently wash hands often using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.



Avoid people who are sick (coughing and sneezing).



Have no contact with individuals outside the household. If children are going to school in-person, they should have limited contact with other kids and teachers, and social distance when possible.

If the child in your household is sick, and you are at a higher risk of serious illness of COVID-19:



Ask a family member or friend for help with taking care of the child. If possible, have only one person in the household take care of the sick child. Create a plan now for an alternate caregiver if possible.



If possible, provide a separate bedroom and bathroom for the child who is sick and maintain a six foot distance.

**6 ft**

If you need to share a bedroom with someone who is sick, make sure the room has good air flow and maintain at least six feet between beds if possible.



Shared bathrooms should be cleaned and disinfected after each use. Before cleaning, open doors and windows or use ventilating fans to increase air circulation.



Have the child who is sick wear a mask inside the house, when possible. When eating, have the child who is sick eat separately from the family.

**In general:**

The best way to protect yourself and reduce the spread of COVID-19 is to limit your interactions with people as much as possible and take precautions to prevent contracting COVID-19 when you do interact with others. Always wear a mask when going out of the house, keep hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content with you, and limit interactions and activities where taking protective measures may be difficult. For more recommendations from the CDC, please visit [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).