



September 1, 2020

Healthcare Provider Information on COVID-19 and Return to School, Childcare or Work

With the current COVID-19 pandemic, it is very difficult to know how to keep children safe from COVID-19 infection. Everyone is struggling to decide whether children should return to school or childcare and whether parents can return to work. The key is ensuring that children get access to the education and developmental opportunities that they need to grow as people while balancing the potential medical risks of going to school during the COVID-19 pandemic.

From across the world there is now a growing body of evidence of how children who contract a SARS-CoV-2 infection respond, from a medical standpoint. It is clear that most children are asymptomatic or have mild symptoms and do very well. There are however a very small number of children, 0.008% of all children that require hospitalization¹. That said, a subset of patients may be at higher risk and in this population there may be some extra precautions required with respect to school attendance. It is also recognized that each family situation is unique and that there may be other high-risk household members to consider. In addition, with COVID-19 still being so new, recommendations from the evidence continue to change.

It is important to balance the risk of infection and transmission of the virus with the potential mental, physical and developmental effects of continued isolation and school closure. Thus for most children, a safe return to school should be possible. The precautions that need to be taken have been well described and more details can be found at the following web links:

- Government of Saskatchewan Safe Schools Plan <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/safe-schools-plan#safe-schools-plan>
- COVID-19: Guidance for School Reopening from Ontario Children's Hospitals <http://www.sickkids.ca/PDFs/About-SickKids/81407-COVID19-Recommendations-for-School-Reopening-SickKids.pdf>
- COVID-19 guidance for schools Kindergarten to Grade 12. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/guidance-schools-childcare-programs.html>

If a patient has one of the conditions listed below, we are recommending that families liaise with their healthcare provider to help decide if the child should attend school in person this year. Please note that this list may change as our knowledge and experience with COVID-19 changes. We will keep this list updated and posted on the Saskkids website <https://momsandkidssask.saskhealthauthority.ca/>

If you have any questions, please contact your patient's pediatrician or pediatric subspecialist directly.

Take care and stay healthy!

From the Department of Pediatrics, College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan

1. Hospitalization Rates and Characteristics of Children Aged <18 Years Hospitalized with Laboratory-Confirmed COVID-19 — COVID-NET, 14 States, March 1–July 25, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6932e3.htm>

Pediatric Cardiology

- No changes as compared to prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Children with severe congenital heart disease before surgery and if unstable after surgery, severe pulmonary hypertension, severe heart failure, if unstable before or after the Fontan operation, or if waiting for or within the early months following heart transplant, following intensified anti-rejection therapy, with unstable graft function, or if other severe comorbidities exist, should be discussed with their care team. To contact the Division of Pediatric Cardiology, please call 306-844-1235.

Pediatric Endocrinology & Diabetes

- No restrictions for endocrine conditions. As with all illnesses, children with Adrenal Insufficiency should follow their 'Illness Management Plan' and increase their dose of corticosteroid (Hydrocortisone/Prednisone) if they acquire COVID-19. To contact the Division of Pediatric Endocrinology clinic, please call 306-655-2048.
- No restrictions to diabetes patients unless they are actively unwell or have other complicating medical conditions. For information on diabetes and COVID19, visit: <https://www.cps.ca/en/blog-blogue/type-1-diabetes-and-covid-19-information-for-parents>. To contact the Pediatric Diabetes Clinic, please call 306-655-2199 or call/email one of the pediatric diabetes nurses or dietitians.

Pediatric Gastroenterology

- Please contact the Division of Pediatric Gastroenterology directly at 306-700-3700 for information related to COVID-19 regarding any child with a known gastrointestinal diagnosis.

Pediatric Hematology

- No changes as compared to prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Children with bone marrow failure, aplastic anemia, pre bone marrow transplant, within one year following allogenic bone marrow transplant or on high doses of immune suppression, should be discussed with their care team. To contact the Division of Pediatric Hematology, please call 306-655-0957

Pediatric Immunology

- No changes as compared to prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Children with severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID or SCID+), within one year following allogenic bone marrow transplant, or with severe susceptibility to viral infections are recommended to not attend school in person and engage in remote learning.

Pediatric Nephrology

- Children within 6 months after a kidney transplant or on combination immunosuppressive therapy for treatment of kidney disease such as nephrotic syndrome or glomerulonephritis should be discussed with their care team. To contact the Division of Pediatric Nephrology, please call 306-844-1231.

Pediatric Neurology

- Please contact the Division of Pediatric Neurology directly at 306-844-1236 or 306-844-1280 regarding any child with a known neurological diagnosis who you think might be at higher risk.

Pediatric Oncology

- No changes as compared to prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Children on an intensive chemotherapy regimen, pre bone marrow transplant or within one year post allogenic bone marrow transplant, should be discussed with their care team. To contact the Division of Pediatric Oncology, please call 306-655-6494. For further information see the International Society of Pediatric Oncology COVID-19 Resources and Guidance <https://siop-online.org/covid-19-resources-and-guidance/> and St Jude's Guidelines for Returning to School <https://together.stjude.org/en-us/families/school/covid-19-return-to-school.html> .

Pediatric Respiriology

- Children with severe pulmonary hypertension, after lung transplant, with severe asthma or severe lower airways disease from other causes, should be discussed with their care team. To contact the Division of Pediatric Respiriology, please call 306-844-1275.

Pediatric Rheumatology

- The Division of Pediatric Rheumatology will contact their patient directly with their recommendations. In case of any queries, please call 306-844-1067.