
Safe at School During COVID-19: Recommendations on Returning to School for Children with Diabetes

With the school year quickly approaching, children with diabetes and their families have questions about returning to school during the current COVID-19 pandemic. The American Diabetes Association® (ADA) is here to help.

It is important to keep in mind that this virus is new, and we are still learning how it affects children with diabetes. In the end, the decision for your child to attend school in-person, receive remote or online learning, or to use an alternate model is a personal decision that should be based on currently available information and an individual risk assessment in consultation with your child's diabetes care provider.

What we know now about diabetes and COVID-19:

- According to the CDC, people with diabetes may be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. This CDC statement is based on data from older individuals with type 2 diabetes.
- At this time, the CDC is reporting that people with type 1 diabetes **may have an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.**
- While children with type 1 diabetes have an autoimmune condition, they are not immunocompromised.
- At this time, medical data indicate that people with type 1 diabetes who maintain an A1C in their target range are **not necessarily at higher risk of developing serious complications from COVID-19** compared to children without diabetes.
- There are increasing reports of people with COVID-19 developing temporarily high glucose levels and, in some cases, DKA. However, there is no convincing evidence at this time that COVID-19 causes autoimmunity or triggers type 1 diabetes. .
- According to the CDC, people of any age with type 2 diabetes are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. There is limited evidence related to children and adolescents with type 2 diabetes. .
- People with diabetes with consistently elevated glucose levels and those with a second illness (such as obesity or heart, kidney or lung disease) are at higher risk.
- For people with diabetes, any viral illness (including COVID-19) can increase the risk for ketones and even DKA if they do not manage their diabetes carefully.

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Should my child choose in-person or virtual learning?

Many schools are making their plans to resume learning in the fall of 2020. Options may include in-person learning, virtual learning or blended/hybrid learning. The options available in each state or school district will be made by public health experts, state regulators and local school leaders. If your school offers an in-person or blended/hybrid model, plans will most likely include wearing masks during in-person instruction, keeping desks three to six feet apart, temperature checks, frequent hand washing and limiting travel between classrooms. School personnel should also have clear plans for managing children that feel ill.

In-person learning may offer many benefits for children including an established schedule and implementation of educational interventions, as well as interaction between student, teachers and peers. Benefits of online learning may include the ability to learn at your own pace, potential access to different learning platforms and a comfortable learning environment (home).

Your diabetes care team will continue to work with you and your school, no matter which learning option you choose for your child.

How can my child and I limit the spread of COVID-19 at school?

- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer frequently.
- Wear a mask when outside of your home.
- Practice physical distancing.
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Avoid being around people who are sick.
- Follow local and state regulations.

What if my child has symptoms of COVID-19?

If you suspect your child may have COVID-19, follow-up with their primary care provider and notify your child's school of their COVID-19 test results.

If your child tests positive for COVID-19, monitor your child's blood glucose (blood sugar) levels and ketones. Follow your diabetes care provider's sick day guidelines for illness and ketone management. Keep in contact with your child's primary care provider and seek urgent medical attention if your child has trouble breathing or is experiencing severe symptoms. Contact your child's diabetes care provider if your child develops low or high glucose levels with ketones.

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My child is very worried about returning to school. What should I say or do?

- Elevated levels of stress can impact blood glucose levels and these tips can help ease your child's stress.
- Keep in mind that every child responds to stress in different ways.
- Understand the facts so you can provide your child with accurate, age-appropriate information.
- Limit your child's exposure to the news and social media.
- Stress that the pandemic is temporary, and adults are working to keep them safe.
- It can help to keep a schedule that mimics the school day. A schedule can help children and adults feel that the situation is more predictable.
- Be an example! Model ways to minimize risk for COVID-19 exposure such as washing your hands, practicing physical distancing and wearing a face mask.

Where can I find additional resources?

- The ADA's Safe at School During COVID-19 (Coronavirus) page has a wealth of resources specific to children's rights at school during the pandemic.
- Find general Safe at School tools and information at the ADA's Safe at School page.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) guidance for people with certain medical conditions.

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