We know that our children learn best when they have the opportunity to be together with their classmates and teachers. We are learning more every day regarding COVID-19 in children and teens, including the role they may play in spreading COVID-19. We are using the latest research to make decisions about how we should operate our schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. We will continue to follow new data and science as it is available to learn more. It is important to understand that current studies and data summarized below still present an early and limited picture of what we know about children and school reopening during the COVID-19 pandemic. Be sure to check back for regular updates by visiting https://www.nc.gov/covid19.

Children are less likely to have COVID-19 or have severe illness with COVID-19 and younger children may be less likely to spread COVID-19 than adults

- Children, particularly younger children, are less likely than adults to have COVID-19.
- Children may be less likely to become infected than adults, even after being exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- Children infected with COVID-19 generally have mild or no symptoms.
- If infected, younger children (less than 10 years) may be less likely to spread COVID-19 to others than adolescents and adults.
- Spread of virus is more likely within household contacts than among non-household contacts.

COVID-19 appears to behave differently in young children and teens in schools than other common respiratory viruses, like the flu

- Although young children play a major role in flu outbreaks, so far this does not appear to be the case with COVID-19.
- While there have been some specific examples, so far from international data, schools have not seemed to play a major role in the spread of COVID-19.
- Studies from other countries suggest school closures did not contribute to the spread of the epidemic.

Less than 6 feet of social distancing may still be protective for children

- The CDC still recommends 6 feet of social distancing as the most health protective distancing.
- However, in low and medium risk settings, 3 feet of social distancing may lead to a similar risk for the spread of COVID-19, especially when people wear cloth face coverings. Because of decreased risk of spread among children, schools may be considered low or medium risk.
- Keeping students (or children) spread out with more space in between them provides additional protection.
Children are less likely to have COVID-19 or have severe illness with COVID-19 and younger children may be less likely to spread COVID-19 than adults.

CDC. Reported laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases and estimated cumulative incidence, by sex and age group — United States; January 22–May 30, 2020


Preprint, MedRxiv. Susceptibility to and transmission of COVID-19 amongst children and adolescents compared with adults: a systematic review and meta-analysis; May 24, 2020


SARS-CoV-2 infections in primary schools in northern France: A retrospective cohort study in an area of high transmission.


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Prevent Epidemics, COVID-19 Weekly Science Review; June 20-26, 2020


Learning Policy Institute, Reopening Schools in the Context of COVID-19: Health and Safety Guidelines from other Countries

Center for Global Development, Back to School: An update on COVID cases as schools reopen; June 12, 2020

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The Lancet, Physical distancing, face masks, and eye protection to prevent person-to-person transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19: a systematic review and meta-analysis; June 1, 2020

World Health Organization, Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19; May 10, 2020

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