



## SCM COVID-19 Guidance for Educators

As public conversations around coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) increase, a natural response for students is to worry about themselves, their family, and their friends becoming ill with COVID-19. Parents/guardians, family members, school staff, and other trusted adults can play an important role in helping students make sense of what they hear in a way that is honest, accurate, and minimizes anxiety or fear. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has created guidelines to help adults have conversations with children about COVID-19 and ways they can avoid getting and spreading the disease.

**Try to keep information simple and remind students that health and school officials are working hard to keep everyone safe and healthy. For your own reference/knowledge and discussion with students, please [click here](#) to read facts from the CDC about COVID-19.**

### General Principles for Talking with Students:

- **Early elementary school students** need brief, simple information that should balance COVID-19 facts with appropriate reassurances that their school and home are safe, that adults are here to help keep them healthy and to take care of them if they do get sick. Give simple examples of the steps people take every day to stop the spreading of germs and to stay healthy, such as washing hands for at least 20 seconds ( or the approx. length of humming the “Happy Birthday” song two times). Use language such as “adults are working hard to keep you safe.”
- **Upper elementary through high school students** will be more vocal in asking questions about whether they are truly safe and what will happen if COVID-19 comes to their school or neighborhood. Students may need assistance separating reality from rumor and fantasy. Discuss efforts of school and community leaders to prevent germs from spreading. Explain the importance of using social media judiciously and responsibly and not to spread inaccurate information from unreliable sources.

Students should be referred directly to appropriate sources of COVID-19 facts. Provide honest, accurate, and factual information about the current status of COVID-19. Having such knowledge can help students feel a sense of control and reduce any misconceptions.

### Appropriate Sources

- [St. Joseph County Department of Health Website](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)



## Facts About COVID-19 for Discussions with Students

### What is COVID-19?

- COVID-19 is the short name for “coronavirus disease 2019.” It is a new virus. Doctors and scientists are still learning about it.
- Recently, this virus has made a lot of people sick. Scientists and doctors think that most people will be ok, especially kids, but some people might get pretty sick.
- Doctors and health experts are working hard to help people stay healthy.

### What can I do so that I don’t get COVID-19?

- You can practice healthy habits at home, school, and play to help protect against the spread of COVID-19:
  - Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow. If you sneeze or cough into a tissue, throw it in the trash right away.
  - Keep your hands out of your mouth, nose, and eyes. This will help keep germs out of your body.
  - Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Follow these five steps—wet, lather (make bubbles), scrub (rub together), rinse and dry. You can sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice.
  - If you don’t have soap and water, have an adult help you use a special hand cleaner.
  - Keep things clean. Older children can help adults at home and school clean the things we touch the most, like desks, doorknobs, light switches, and remote controls. (Note for adults: you can find more information about cleaning and disinfecting on CDC’s website.)
  - If you feel sick, stay home. Just like you don’t want to get other people’s germs in your body, other people don’t want to get your germs either.

### What happens if you get sick with COVID-19?

- COVID-19 can look different in different people. For many people, being sick with COVID-19 would be a little bit like having the flu. People can get a fever, cough, or have a hard time taking deep breaths. Most people who have gotten COVID-19 have not gotten very sick. Only a small group of people who get it have had more serious problems. From what doctors have seen so far, most children don’t seem to get very sick. While a lot of adults get sick, most adults get better.
- If you do get sick, it doesn’t mean you have COVID-19. People can get sick from all kinds of germs. What’s important to remember is that if you do get sick, the adults at home and school will help get you any help that you need.



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## COVID-19 Additional and Reliable Sources of Information

- [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)
- [St. Joseph County Department of Health \(SJCDH\)](https://www.sjcdh.org)
- [Indiana Department of Health](https://www.in.gov/health)
- [CDC.gov FAQ](https://www.cdc.gov/faq)
- [Mishawaka Schools](https://www.mishawaka.k12.in.us)