

## Social Distancing During School Closures

Social distancing methods are ways to increase physical distance between people in schools and workplaces, at community events, and at other places people gather. Examples include:

- Not shaking hands. Instead, bump fists or elbows.
- Increasing distance between people to six feet to help reduce spread.
- Reducing the number of large group gatherings or activities.
- Keeping children and teens from gathering in other public places if school is closed.
- Staying home.

If you live with someone who is over 60 years old or chronically ill be extra careful to practice social distancing. This may mean not having grandparents provide child care during this time of social distancing.

Parents may wonder given the fact that children will be home for several weeks how they can practice social distancing. Being in close proximity and being together in groups will increase the likelihood of spread of disease. Yet, is recognized that children need to stay active, have a routine, and socialize in order to support physical and emotional health.

Generally, outdoor activities are better than indoor activities. While at this time small (3-5) gatherings of non-family members are not prohibited, health experts continue to stress avoidance of congregating with others outside of your family members. This is a unique situation and period of time for everyone. It may help to view these disruptions and limits on social interactions as temporary.

Practice kindness and stay home if you are ill and do not send ill children to play outdoors. Avoid playground equipment as there multiple surfaces that are likely to be contaminated with “germs.” Remind children and teens to wash hands frequently and practice good respiratory/cough hygiene (cover coughs)! Don’t forget to frequently clean and disinfect remote control devices and video game controllers.

While your children are home try to keep their days as routine and scheduled as possible. Here are a few tips suggested by the American Academy of Pediatrics:

- **Read books with your child.** It's not only fun, but [reading together](#) strengthens your bond with your child AND helps their development.
- **Make time for active play.** Bring out the blocks, balls, jump ropes and buckets and let the creativity go. Play [games](#) that kids of all ages can play, like tag or duck duck goose. Let your kids make up new games. Encourage older kids to make up a workout or dance to keep them moving.
- **Keep an eye on media time.** Whenever possible, play video games or go online with your child to keep that time structured and limited. If kids are missing their school friends or other family, try video chats to stay in touch.

## References

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