

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.

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. **The key to slowing the spread of COVID-19 is to limit contact as much as possible.** While school is out, children should not have playdates with children from other households. If children are playing outside their own homes, it is essential that they remain 6 feet from anyone who is not in their own household. 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.

Remember, if children meet outside of school in bigger groups, it can put everyone at risk. Yet, is recognized that children need to stay active, have a routine, and socialize in order to support physical and emotional health.

Since March 25, 2020, Wisconsin has been under a [Safer At Home public health order](#). The order requires all individuals present within the State of Wisconsin to stay at home or at their place of residence, with exceptions. 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. Outdoor activities are not prohibited as long as social distancing is maintained in accordance to the [Safer At Home public health order](#).

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.” Make sure children practice everyday preventive behaviors, such as washing their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important if you have been in a public place. Along with washing hands, remind children and teens to 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.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on their website has the following recommendations:

Create a schedule and routine for learning at home, but remain flexible.

- Have consistent bedtimes and get up at the same time, Monday through Friday.
- Structure the day for learning, free time, healthy meals and snacks, and physical activity.
- Allow flexibility in the schedule—it's okay to adapt based on your day.

Consider the needs and adjustment required for your child's age group.

- The transition to being at home will be different for preschoolers, K-5, middle school students, and high school students. Talk to your child about expectations and how they are adjusting to being at home versus at school.
- Consider ways your child can stay connected with their friends without spending time in person.

Look for ways to make learning fun.

- Have hands-on activities, like puzzles, painting, drawing, and making things.
- Independent play can also be used in place of structured learning. Encourage children to build a fort from sheets or practice counting by stacking blocks.
- Practice handwriting and grammar by writing letters to family members. This is a great way to connect and limit face-to-face contact.
- Start a journal with your child to document this time and discuss the shared experience.
- Use audiobooks or see if your local library is hosting virtual or live-streamed reading events.

References

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