



If your child has symptoms of COVID-19

Last updated: 02 October 2020 at 3.40pm

This advice is for babies and children up to the end of primary school, usually the age of 12 or 13.

Teenagers should follow the advice for adults about [when to contact their GP about getting tested for COVID-19](#)

Children and babies can get COVID-19 (coronavirus). But they seem to get it less often than adults and it's usually less serious.

When to get urgent medical help

If your child becomes very unwell quickly, it's rare that they have COVID-19. Their symptoms may be because of another illness.

[Read about symptoms in babies and children that need urgent medical help](#)

Phone 999 or 112 if your baby is under 3 months old and has a high temperature (38 degrees Celsius or more). If your baby is aged 3 to 6 months and has a high temperature, phone your GP urgently.

When to keep your child at home and phone your GP

Do not send your child to school or childcare if any of the following is true.

Your child has:

- a temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or more
- any other [common symptoms of COVID-19](#) - a new cough, loss or changed sense of taste or smell, or shortness of breath
- been in [close contact](#) with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19
- been living with someone who is unwell and may have COVID-19
- an existing breathing condition that has recently got worse

If your child has any of the common symptoms of COVID-19 you will need to:

1. Isolate your child from other people - this means keeping them at home and completely avoiding contact with other people, as much as possible. [Read advice on self-isolation](#)
2. Phone your GP - they will advise you if your child needs a [COVID-19 test](#).
3. Everyone that your child lives with should also [restrict their movements](#), at least until your child gets a diagnosis from their GP or a COVID-19 test result. This means not going to school, childcare or work.
4. [Treat your child at home for their symptoms](#).

Your child should only leave your home to have a test or to see your GP.

If your child has been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 but has no symptoms, [follow the advice for children who are close contacts](#).

Follow the advice on what to do if your child:

- [is given another diagnosis by your GP](#)
- [is not tested and is also not given another diagnosis from your GP](#)
- [tests positive for COVID-19](#)
- [tests negative for COVID-19](#)

Other symptoms

If your child has symptoms such as headaches or a sore throat, keep them at home for at least 48 hours. These are not common symptoms of COVID-19, but they could be a sign of another infection. You and the rest of your family can continue your normal routine. You do not need to restrict your movements as long as you are not ill.

Keep an eye on your child's symptoms for 48 hours. After 48 hours it's usually okay to send your child back to school or childcare as long as:

- their symptoms do not get worse
- they do not develop new symptoms
- they do not need paracetamol or ibuprofen during these 48-hours

[Read guidelines on what to do if your child has a runny nose or is sneezing](#)

Diarrhoea

If your child has [diarrhoea](#), they should stay at home and not go to school until they have not had diarrhoea for 48 hours.

You and the rest of your family can continue your normal routine. You do not need to restrict your movements as long as you are not ill.

Travel abroad

Your child will need to restrict their movements for 14 days if they have just returned from a country that is not on the ['green list'](#). This means they should stay at home and not go to school. They do not need to see a GP unless they develop symptoms.

Everyone they travelled with should also stay at home for 14 days once they return to Ireland.

[View the green list of countries on gov.ie.](#)

Children who are close contacts of someone who has COVID-19

If your child has symptoms, follow the [advice on keeping your child at home - isolate your child, phone your GP, and restrict your movements](#).

If your child has no symptoms but has been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, they should:

- [restrict their movements for 14 days](#) - this includes not going to school
- get tested for COVID-19 - a [contact tracer](#) will arrange this when they call you

They should do this even if they feel well. Household members, such as siblings, do not need to restrict their movements as long as the child has no symptoms.

Children who have no symptoms but have had close contact with a case will have 2 tests for COVID-19. This is because it can take up to 14 days for the virus to show up in your system after you have been exposed to it.

The second test will be 7 days after their last contact with the person who has COVID-19. If this is close to when they had their first test, they will only have 1 test.

[Read more about children and testing](#)

When it's okay to send your child to school or childcare

As long as your child has not been in [close contact](#) with someone who has the virus, it's usually okay to send them to school or childcare if they:

- only have nasal symptoms, such as a runny nose or a sneeze
- do not have a temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or more (as long as their temperature has not been lowered by taking any form of paracetamol or ibuprofen)
- do not have a new cough
- do not live with anyone who is unwell and may have COVID-19
- have been told by a GP that their illness is caused by something else, that is not COVID-19. Your GP will tell you when they can return to school or childcare.
- have got a [not detected \('negative'\) COVID-19 test result](#) and have not had symptoms for 48 hours
- have not had diarrhoea for 48 hours

Children who are close contacts of someone who has COVID-19 should [follow the advice to restrict their movements](#).

Your child does not need a GP medical certification or a note from a GP to return to school. But their school may ask you to sign a form to say that your child is well enough to attend. This is called a [Return To Educational Facility Parental Declaration Form \(PDF, 1 page, 95KB\)](#) [\[2\]](#).

Runny nose or sneezing

You do not need to restrict your child's movements if the only symptoms they have are:

- a runny nose
- sneezing

They can continue to go to school or childcare if these are the only symptoms they have.

If your child also has a high temperature (38 degrees Celsius or over) or has any other common symptoms of COVID-19 - isolate your child, phone your GP and restrict your movements.

Most of the time, you do not need to phone your GP if a runny nose or sneezing are your child's only symptoms. Talk to your pharmacist instead.

A runny nose or sneezing on their own are more likely to be symptoms of a cold or other viral infection.

[Compare symptoms of COVID-19, flu and cold](#)

[Read more about colds, coughs and viral infections in children](#)

Children and testing

Your GP will decide if your child needs a test for COVID-19.

They will usually need a test if they have:

- been in close contact with someone who has the virus
- common symptoms of COVID-19
- been in contact with someone who has symptoms

They may also need a test if they are admitted to hospital for any illness.

While you wait for their test and test result, [follow the advice on keeping your child at home](#).

Read more about [testing for COVID-19](#).

Bringing your child to a test centre

You may need to drive your child to a test centre. They may find going to a test centre a strange experience. They will see people in protective clothing. They may find this frightening.

Explain to them what will happen before they go. You can read about [what to expect at a test centre](#).

These visual guides may also help children who need to be tested:

[Getting ready to go to the Test Centre \(Comic\) \(PDF, 5.35 MB, 3 pages\)](#)

[Getting ready to go to the Test Drive-in Centre \(Comic\) \(PDF, 4.30 MB, 3 pages\)](#)

[Autism Social Story for Testing \(PDF, 837 KB, 4 pages\)](#)

Not-detected ('negative') test result, or another diagnosis

Your child can return to their normal activities once they have been given either:

- a not-detected (negative) test result and are 48 hours without symptoms and, or
- another diagnosis, that is not COVID-19

You and anyone your child lives with will no longer need to restrict your movements.

Positive test result or not tested and no alternative diagnosis

Your child will need to continue to self-isolate if:

- their test result is positive
- they are not tested and are also not given an alternative diagnosis - if this happens they should be treated as if they have COVID-19

They'll need to remain in self-isolation until both of these apply:

- they have not had a high temperature (38 degrees Celsius or over) for 5 days
- it has been 10 days since they first developed symptoms

Caring for child in self-isolation

If you are infected after a young child who is isolating there is a risk that you can become infected too. It will be difficult for you to completely isolate a child from them.

Because of this, you need to take extra care to reduce the risk of spreading the virus and restrict your movements for longer than usual.

You will need to [restrict your movements for 17 days](#) - this includes the 10 days that your child is in isolation and for 7 days after your child's isolation period ends.

Everyone in the household should:

- be [tested for COVID-19](#)
- [restrict their movements](#) for 17 days

[Read more about self-isolation](#).

If you have symptoms or are unwell

Self-isolate if you have symptoms or become unwell. Follow the [advice on self-isolation](#).

You may also need to:

- be [tested for COVID-19](#)
- [treat your symptoms at home](#)

Related topics

[Protecting your child from COVID-19](#)

[Explaining COVID-19 to your child](#)

[What to do if you live with someone with COVID-19](#)

[How COVID-19 is spread](#)

Did you find what you were looking for?

Join the Fight Against Coronavirus. Download the CovidTracker app

On this page

- [When to keep your child at home and phone your GP](#)
- [Travel abroad](#)
- [Children who are close contacts of someone who has COVID-19](#)
- [+8 More](#)

