

Recommendations on returning to school or day care for children with gastrointestinal disease

We understand that this is a very stressful time for everyone, particularly for parents with children who have chronic gastrointestinal (GI) problems. There is still a lot that we don't know about COVID-19, and we continue to learn more daily. From what we know, however, most children who get sick from this virus have mild symptoms.

If you do not feel comfortable sending your child to school or day care after reading this, you should keep your child at home. We also realize that not everyone is in a situation that enables one parent to stay home with children. In these situations, where children with chronic GI problems do return to school, good hygiene including social distancing and frequent, effective hand washing for 20 seconds with soap and water are essential.

Healthy siblings can return to school. Of course, they need to practice good hygiene, including social distancing at school and effective hand washing after coming home. In situations where we think your child can return to school, you can also return to work. In situations where we recommend that your child stays home, you may still return to work but practice good hygiene, including social distancing at work, effective hand washing, and showering and changing clothes once you've arrived home.

To simplify matters, we would like to address the most common conditions of the patients we follow.

Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)

Some children with IBD **can** return to school or day care. However, the following groups should not return if possible:

- Children who are immunocompromised due to the medication they are taking. These medications include steroid medications (prednisone, budesonide (Entocort)), immunomodulators (Azathioprine, 6-MP/ Purinethol, Methotrexate) or biologics (Infliximab/ Remicade, Adalimumab/ Humira, Ustekinumab/ Stelara, Vedolizumab/ Entyvio).
- Children who have active symptoms from their inflammatory bowel disease.

Celiac Disease

Most children with celiac disease can return to school or day care. If your child has any other medical conditions, please discuss this with your family doctor or pediatrician.

Esophageal Atresia/Tracheoesophageal Fistula

If your child has chronic respiratory symptoms please discuss this with your lung specialist. If they do not have chronic respiratory symptoms, they can return to school or day care.

Chronic Liver Disease

COVID-19's effects on the liver are still not clear in children. Therefore:

- Patients with chronic liver disease from conditions such as biliary atresia, Alagille syndrome, primary sclerosing cholangitis (PSC), and Wilson's disease should stay home if possible;
- Patients with autoimmune hepatitis who are taking immunosuppressive medications such as prednisone, budesonide, azathioprine, or 6-MP/ purinethol should stay home.
- Patients who have been undergoing treatment for varices should also stay home.
- Children with fatty liver disease can safely return to school or day care.

Eosinophilic Esophagitis

Most children with eosinophilic esophagitis can return to school or day care. If your child has any other medical conditions, please discuss this with your family doctor or pediatrician.