



L'Hôpital de Montréal pour enfants
The Montreal Children's Hospital

Centre universitaire de santé McGill
McGill University Health Centre

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RHUMATOLOGIE
RHEUMATOLOGY

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School Attendance for Children with Rheumatic Diseases Fall 2020

The Rheumatology team recognizes the stress that parents and families are facing in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and especially now in relation to the return to school. There are many unknowns about COVID-19, however, current information shows that only 3-7% of COVID-19 cases have been in children and the risk of serious illness for them remains low. There has been a low rate of hospitalizations for COVID-19 infections in children in Canada with no deaths reported.

We are still learning about the virus and its effect on children with rheumatic diseases; however information to-date shows that these children are not more often affected, even if on treatment.

While weighing the risks and benefits of school attendance, the rheumatology team suggests that all children followed for rheumatic diseases, regardless of their treatment, return to school in the fall. We understand that you have carefully respected all the COVID-related public health guidelines to-date and that this feels like a big step. We also recognize and support the need for each family to make their own final decision.

Continue to be vigilant for possible symptoms of COVID-19 infection (these symptoms include but are not limited to: **fever, cough, stuffy or runny nose, sore throat, headache with muscles aches, loss of taste or smell, vomiting and diarrhea**). If your child has any of these symptoms, COVID testing is recommended, either at the Montreal Children's Hospital COVID-testing center or in your community. If you are not sure where your local COVID-testing center is, please call 1-877-644-4545. If your child requires testing, you should **hold** doses of the following immune suppressing medications (methotrexate, Enbrel, Erelzi, Humira, Remicade, Actemra, Orencia, Ilaris) and **contact** the rheumatology nurses for further guidance. If your child takes the following immune suppressing medications (oral prednisone, Cellcept, Imuran, Neoral, Arava, Kineret) do **not** stop the medication but please **contact** the rheumatology nurses.

Continue to practice physical distancing, frequent hand washing and wearing of masks when out in public places. In the context of school attendance, we suggest that your child wears a mask, regardless of their age wherever possible, for example: on the school bus. Children should be taught how to properly wear and store a face mask (see link below).

It is important to realize that the influenza virus has similar symptoms as COVID-19 but is more likely to cause serious illness in children with rheumatic diseases. Therefore, we recommend your child and family get vaccinated for influenza.

Recommendations regarding COVID-19 may change over time and we will keep you updated should this occur.

Quebec's back to school plan: https://www.quebec.ca/en/education/back-to-school-plan-fall-covid-19/?utm_source=print&utm_medium=print&utm_campaign=MEES_rentree_2020

Face coverings: <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/wearing-a-face-covering-in-public-settings-in-the-context-of-the-covid-19-pandemic/#c57468>