COVID-19 & the Classroom

Response to Questions Received from School Teachers and Staff

September 30, 2020
The information presented here is the most up-to-date, data-driven and evidence-based science to help school districts make important decisions regarding face-to-face instruction.

Duke University and its partners will not make decisions nor will they advise specific action.
Thank you for joining!

- The presenters welcome science-related questions submitted prior to and during the livestream event
- To ask a question during the livestream, use the comments section in YouTube to pose your question
- Science-related questions will be collated and combined with other questions and posted to the “Frequently Asked Questions” section of our website
- To view FAQs, webinar slides, and video recordings, please visit: https://abcsciencecollaborative.org/
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Topic Areas for Discussion

• Aerosolization & Ventilation
• Surface
• Transmission & Masks
• Testing
• Vaccine & Timeline
• Flu & COVID-19
• Special Needs

https://abcsciencecollaborative.org/
Question 1: What is the message to the public about remaining calm during the COVID-19/flu season?
How do we protect ourselves? Prevention of COVID-19 and the Flu

• Both can be prevented by mask-wearing,
  – coughing into the crook of your elbow (when unmasked at home)
• Frequent and thorough hand washing,
• Staying home when sick and limiting contact with people who are infected.
• Physical distancing limits the spread of COVID-19 in communities.

Encouraging News!

“The behavioral changes people have already adopted to flatten the curve of COVID-19—such as social distancing, hand washing, and mask wearing—could lessen the impact of the flu.” — Marc Lipsitch, Harvard Epidemiologist and Director for Center for Communicable Disease Dynamics

Why is it important to get a flu vaccine EVERY year?

• Flu viruses are constantly changing, so flu vaccines may be updated from one season to the next to protect against the viruses that research suggests will be common during the upcoming flu season.

• Your protection from a flu vaccine declines over time.

• Yearly vaccination is needed for the best protection.
Question 2: If we agree that the safest way for children to return to the classroom is if everyone involved follows the 3 Ws (waiting 6 ft apart, washing hands thoroughly and frequently and wearing masks), how can we keep everyone safe if we allow the youngest and special needs populations to return first?
What special needs situations were identified by school teachers and staff?

- Conditions that limit mask-wearing ability (student or teacher)
- Special services that require close or prolonged face-to-face contact with student
- COVID-19 transmission in body fluids (saliva, stool, feeding/breathing tubes)
- Conditions that place individuals or family members at high risk of severe disease
What special-needs conditions limit a child’s ability or requirement to wear a mask?

• Short answer: very few!

• Face coverings are recommended for all children, including those with special needs, while in congregate settings outside the home.

Risk from assisting with bathroom breaks or toileting.

- Goal should be to ensure proper handwashing before and after close contact for bathroom breaks
- Keep groups small
  - May require increased staffing to allow for staggered bathroom breaks
- Toilet flush spread?
  - Toilets are known to generate aerosols and have been associated with transmission of bacteria in hospital settings
  - While studies have identified the virus that causes COVID-19 in stool samples, investigators have not been readily able to culture virus from stool. Therefore **infectivity from stool is unclear and has not been documented so far**
- Frequency of cleaning?
  - High-touch surfaces should be cleaned routinely
Movement through the building and assisting children with special needs

• Should students move classes?
  – Preference would be to limit the movement of students and maintain cohorts
  – By maintaining small cohorts of students that stay together, you decrease the number of potential opportunities for exposure
  – Teachers can rotate between classes as needed – wash hands and clean environment

• What about hallway traffic?
  – Would minimize movement of students in hallways and ensure there are not opportunities to congregate in hallways
  – Low risk with short interactions
  – Goal is to minimize mixing of students from different classes
Question 3: What should we do if we start showing symptoms of illness that are not on our daily COVID-19 questionnaire? For example: runny nose or headache, or other symptoms of allergies or the common cold.
Question 4: What long term breathing affect will wearing a mask all day have on adults and children?
Long term effects of mask wearing

- Prolonged use of any face mask, including the N95 respirator, has not been shown to cause toxic effects of carbon dioxide or lack of adequate air in healthy people.
  - Some people with severe chronic lung disease may find it harder to breathe when wearing a mask, but not because of carbon dioxide.
- Many health care workers regularly wear masks for long periods (such as when performing surgery) and without negative effects.
- Cloth masks reduce the number of microorganisms that someone releases into the air. So, the more people wear masks in an area, the fewer potential viral droplets go into the space, which lessens the risk that someone will be exposed to the virus.

Question 5: Your seminars have all focused on the three W's in order to open schools successfully. If schools return to daily instruction, I do not understand how that would be possible. Do you see that as a safe way to open, not requiring social distancing, especially during flu season?
The three W’s: Wear, Wait, Wash

If you leave home, know your Ws!

**WEAR**
a cloth face covering.

**WAIT**
6 feet apart. Avoid close contact.

**WASH**
your hands often or use hand sanitizer.

@NCDHHS  #StayStrongNC
Question 8: What is the likelihood that a rapid FDA-approved SARS-CoV-2 antigen test (inexpensive enough to be self-administered daily prior to school) will be available for teachers and students once we return to the classroom (later this fall? early next year?)?
COVID-19 Vaccine Status

- Currently 3 candidate vaccines in US phase III trials
  - Pfizer
  - Moderna
  - Astra Zeneca
  - Currently enrolling in the UK and on hold in the United States
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Question 9: Often when I see people engaged in disinfecting practices using approved water based sanitizers. They are often used in spray bottles. Frequently, I see either a spray and walk-away technique and a spray wipe. In both cases the remaining residue is allowed to evaporate. Are both of these techniques adequate to kill viruses on hard surfaces?
Surfaces - Cleaning & Disinfection

• Cleaning
  – Physically removes germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces or objects by using soap (or detergent) and water
    • Wear reusable or disposable gloves
    • Clean surfaces using soap and water if visibly stained, then use disinfectant
    • Cleaning with soap and water reduces number of germs, dirt and impurities on the surface. Disinfecting kills germs on surfaces
    • Practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces.

Surfaces Cleaning & Disinfection

- **Disinfecting**
  - Using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces or objects
  - Keeping surface wet for a period of time
  - Precautions such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product
  - **Always read and follow the directions on the label** to ensure safe and effective use
    - Sealed bleach solutions will be effective for disinfection up to 24 hours.
    - Alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol may also be used.

- **Remember safety first**
Key Points

- Clean high-touch surfaces frequently
- Limit shared equipment & have extra supplies
- Designate people to clean spaces before, during and after use
- Place cleaning products in key locations
- Use approved cleaning products

EPA.GOV; List of Disinfectants
Question 10; Because I tend to work with students closely, do I need a fresh mask and or shield for each session? I'm a speech/language pathologist in an elementary school.
Question 4: Should teachers exposed to body fluids wear eye protection?

- Eye protection may be worn at teacher’s discretion
  - Prevents droplets/aerosols from contacting mucous membranes of eyes
  - Provides additional layer of protection, especially when non-compliance with masking is expected
Question 11: I am an art teacher. When we go back every student will walk through my door and use my supplies. What suggestions could you give for this situation?
Key Points

• The best ways to prevent spread on shared materials is to limit the amount of virus on shared materials:
  – Limit sharing
  – Wear a mask
  – Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer
Question 12: What are the highest risk factors for children and adults in contracting COVID-19 and experiencing complications?
Who is at High-Risk for Severe Illness for COVID-19 and Flu?

**Adults:**
- Older Adults
- People with certain underlying medical conditions
- Pregnant women

**Children:**
- Flu
  - The risk of complications for healthy children is higher for flu compared to COVID-19 especially:
    - Young children
    - Those with chronic medical conditions
- COVID-19
  - School-aged children infected with COVID-19 are at higher risk of Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C), a rare but severe complication of COVID-19.
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Thank you.
COVID-19 and Flu Symptoms: Similarities and Differences

Similarities:
Both COVID-19 and flu can have:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle pain or body aches
- Headache
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults

Differences:

- Loss of sense of smell and taste
- COVID-toes
- Flu is vaccine preventable