



ARKANSAS READY TO LEARN

HEALTHY

SCHOOL GUIDE

Beginning in-person school again in Arkansas is not easy. A lot has changed since March 2020. Everyone has a lot of questions. We are still in the middle of a pandemic, and information and advice changes often. We are learning more about COVID-19 each day. The more we know, the more we can take steps to help keep us healthy.



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Health
For a Better State of Health

This guide was written and assembled by a team of medical, behavioral health, and education experts from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Arkansas Children's, the Arkansas Department of Health, and the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, and our partners. The goal of the guide is to bring together good health information. This information includes the latest scientific advice, guidelines, and best practices. Every school is different. This guide can help school officials, educators, and families plan for in-person learning. We want you to have the best information you may need to make good decisions for your school, your family, and your community.

NEW VIRUS, NEW DAY

We are all making decisions every day. Some decisions may change as we learn new information about the virus that causes COVID-19. The number of cases in a community may also change the decision-making. Arkansas Department of Health provides regular updates about what is happening in your community. Be prepared to return to virtual learning if needed.

This guide is informed by the most recent clinical information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Arkansas Department of Health, and the American Academy of Pediatrics. What we know will continue to grow as scientists, physicians, and epidemiologists study the virus. Please continue to watch for the latest information and recommendations from trusted places like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Arkansas Department of Health. The information in this guide is current as of the release date.

Every school should be prepared to return to virtual learning if needed.

This document is not guidance for whether schools should or should not open. When schools open for in-person learning in accordance with Arkansas Department of Health guidelines, this document is intended to provide support.

CONTENTS

3	Two Important Phone Numbers
4	How COVID-19 is Spread
5	Healthy Habits: What We Do
7	Healthy Environments: Spaces and Places
10	Healthy Operations: How We Do It
13	What's in Your Backpack
14	Steps to a Healthy School Day
15	Appendix How to Protect Yourself from COVID-19 How to Wash Your Hands Correctly How to Wear Your Face Covering Correctly

Two Important Phone Numbers

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) has established a Ready for School Resource Call Center. The purpose of the call center is to provide Arkansans with information and resources regarding the reopening of schools.

- The Help Line is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- Bilingual support is available. The Help Line is made possible through a partnership between the Arkansas Department of Education and the Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Bilingual Resource Network, Arkansas Children's, Republic of the Marshall Islands Consulate, and UAMS.

The Arkansas Department of Health and Arkansas Department of Education also have a hotline available for school district and school questions about:

- Students or staff who may have COVID-19
- How to isolate students or staff so they don't spread the virus if they have it
- How to quarantine people who may be close contacts to students or staff who may have COVID-19

The Ready for School
Resource Help Line:
1-833-353-6050

The ADH and ADE
hotline number:
1-833-504-0155

How COVID-19 is Spread

COVID-19 is caused by a virus. The virus spreads from one person to another. It spreads when people are near each other. Respiratory droplets come out of a person's mouth and nose when they cough, sneeze, talk, or sing. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of other people who are nearby. Sometimes the droplets go into the lungs or upper airway when people breathe.

COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms. Although people may not feel sick, they still can spread the virus to other people. Physical distancing, or staying 6 feet or more away from another person, can help stop the virus from spreading. Wearing face coverings can help stop the virus from spreading. Cleaning hands often, with soap and water or with hand sanitizer, can help stop the virus from spreading.

Signs and Symptoms

Common COVID-19 symptoms are:

- Fever (temperature of 100.4°F or higher)
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Fatigue
- Nausea/vomiting
- Diarrhea

It is important to screen for symptoms. Screening means asking people if they have the symptoms, watching for illness, and checking for a fever of 100.4°F or higher. Some children and adults have other health conditions that can lead to very serious sickness if they get infected with COVID-19. To protect others, it is important for children and adults to stay home when they feel sick.

Many children and adults infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 are asymptomatic, which means they do not have any signs or symptoms of illness. They can still spread the virus to other people, even if they do not show signs or symptoms. That is why taking other important steps, like wearing face coverings, staying 6 feet or more away from each other, and cleaning hands often, is so important.



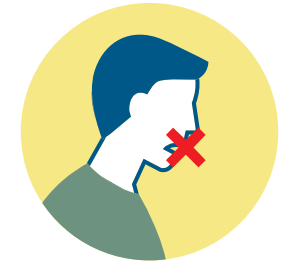
FEVER



COUGH

NASAL CONGESTION OR
RUNNY NOSE

SORE THROAT

SHORTNESS
OF BREATHNEW LOSS OF TASTE
OR SMELLDIARRHEA, NAUSEA
OR VOMITING

FATIGUE



HEADACHE

MUSCLE OR
BODY ACES

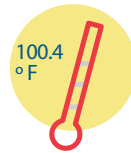
Healthy Habits: What We Do

There are things that schools, educators, children, and families can do to help keep COVID-19 from spreading.

Health Check

There are two important steps to take every day that make up a health check.

The first, is a symptom check. The second is a fever check. A fever is a temperature of 100.4°F or higher. At home, and before leaving for school, a grown-up should check a child for symptoms (like cough, shortness of breath, loss of smell or taste, or sore throat). School staff, administrators, and educators should also check themselves for symptoms before they go to work.



Review symptoms with children to make sure they notice when they feel sick. Talk with them about how to let a grown-up know when they feel sick or like they have a fever.

Not all people with COVID-19 will have symptoms or a fever. Not all people who have symptoms or a fever have COVID-19.

Stay Home When You are Sick

It is important that anyone who feels sick, or has a fever, stays home.



Physical Distance

Stay 6 feet or more apart as much as possible. Being physically close to each other can increase the chance of sharing the virus. It can be helpful to talk with children about why there are areas marked off that show where to stand, and why their desks and other seats are placed further apart.

Physical distancing does not mean children cannot still stay connected socially, by talking with friends and playing games where there is still space between them. Some steps that can help children remember to give space between themselves and others are:

- Spaced markings on the ground
- Desks and furniture that are spaced out
- Assigned seating on buses and in classrooms
- Closing every other restroom stall and sink

Wear a Face Covering

All students in K-12 should wear a face covering throughout the school day, except when it is not medically safe. Pediatrician groups, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, recommend face coverings for school children as a very important way to reduce spread of the virus in schools. Students can remove face coverings while eating or exercising and put them back on as soon as the activity is finished.



Many students in PreK can wear face coverings, although it might be more difficult in this age group. The focus in PreK should be on using face coverings when a physical distance of 6 feet between students cannot be kept. Grown-ups like educators, staff, bus drivers, and administrators should wear a face covering at all times. Face coverings should NOT have a mesh or screen in the center of the mask. This is called an exhalation valve, and it does not protect people from spreading COVID-19.

Face coverings should not be placed on:

- Children younger than 2 years old
- Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious
- Anyone who is not able to put the face covering on, or take it off, without help

Clean Your Hands and Spaces

Clean hands and clean spaces are important. Families and educators can help by teaching children how to wash their hands well. Everyone can practice together. Hands should be washed for 20 seconds with soap and water. Twenty seconds is about two choruses of the song “Happy Birthday.”



Hand sanitizer also can be used if it has at least 60% alcohol in it. Hand sanitizer should be available in the classroom and other areas where children, staff, educators, and administrators are. Hand sanitizer should be kept out of reach of younger children. Adults should pay attention and oversee the use of hand sanitizer. Children can be encouraged to not touch other people’s items and to clean their hands often. Hands can have germs on them even when they do not look dirty. Hand sanitizer should only be used if hands are not visibly dirty.

Stations should be set up so that it is easy for students and staff to clean their hands when they enter school buildings. If a sink with soap and water is not available, provide hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

Educators should clean spaces often. It is important to follow the directions on cleaning and disinfectant products. Some of the products have to stay on surfaces for a certain amount of time in order to kill the virus.

The Right Supplies

In order to help with these habits, there are supplies schools need. These include soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, cloth face coverings (when possible), gloves, and no-touch or foot-pedal trash cans.



Share Information - Signs and Messages

Signs and messages can help everyone remember the new habits. Everyone has more steps in their day and more things to remember to stay healthy. Be creative with these reminders.

Ideas include:

- Post signs in areas where students go often, like school entrances and restrooms. The signs can show pictures of the new habits, like how to wear a face covering or wash hands the right way.
- Broadcast regular announcements on reducing the spread of COVID-19 on PA systems or other communication channels.
- Include messages about behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19 when communication is shared between schools, the community, and families. These messages could be posted in places like school websites, in emails, and on school social media accounts.

Healthy Environments: Places and Spaces

There are ways schools can help our places and spaces stay healthy.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces that are touched are an important part of healthy places and spaces. These areas may include playground equipment, door handles, and sink handles. Clean these areas within the school and on school buses at least daily or between use as much as possible. It is best not to share objects like art supplies, toys, and games. If items are shared, they should be cleaned between use.

Schools should develop a schedule for increased and routine cleaning and disinfection. Reading the instructions before using cleaners and disinfectants can help make sure they are used correctly. Products should be stored away from children and locked. Cleaning products should not be used near children. There should be good ventilation, or air flow, when products are used by and around staff. Choose disinfectants that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has designated for use against SARS-CoV-2 and follow manufacturer instructions for application and contact time. When using disinfectant sprays, disposable paper towels should be used where possible, instead of reusable towels.

Shared Objects

Before COVID-19, children were encouraged to share. Now that we are trying to keep from spreading the virus, it is important to talk with children about why we are not sharing as much as we used to. Now, we discourage sharing of items that are difficult to clean or disinfect. Some toys, materials, and furnishings that are likely to encourage close contact or are difficult to clean should be removed from the classroom. Please note: More learning materials may need to be added to ensure children still have enough variety to support different kinds of learning and exploration.

Some schools may assign each student their own supplies, such as art materials or equipment. If that is not possible, classes may limit the use of supplies and equipment to one group of children at a time, and clean and disinfect between use. Keep each child's belongings separated from others' and in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or areas. Try not to share electronic devices, toys, books, and other games or learning aids, especially those that are hard to clean.

Indoor Air Flow

Good ventilation, which is the process by which air moves around in a space, is important. Try to get fresh air inside whenever it is possible, by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk. An example of a safety risk is if it increases the chance of falling. Make sure that ventilation systems operate properly and at their maximum capacity when fresh air is not possible. This includes checking to make sure the vents are not blocked by books, stacked items, or furniture. If possible, filter air in the room or the building, and consider the use of portable HEPA filtration units.

Drinking Water

A drinking water fountain is a high touch area, which is of particular concern for spreading the virus. Therefore, we recommend NOT using water fountains for drinking at this time.

Water bottle filling stations are recommended. If water bottle filling stations are not possible, allow students and staff to bring their own water, or fill their bottles with water from sinks. This will help keep people from touching and using water fountains. Some schools provide cups that can be thrown away after they are used. Teach students not to share water bottles.



How Spaces are Set Up

There isn't one easy answer, or one-size-fits-all solution, for how school spaces are set up to help everyone stay healthy while learning. We do know that keeping students and educators spread out can help keep from spreading the virus. Ways to do this may include:

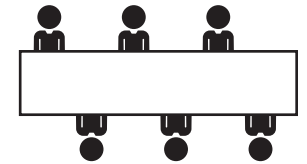
- Space seating/desks at least 6 feet apart if at all possible.
- Turn desks to face in the same direction (rather than facing each other), or have students sit on only one side of tables, spaced apart.
- Stagger seating by row to create a checkerboard seating design.
- Remove seating that is not needed and difficult to clean.
- Create distance between children on school buses. For example, seat children with one child per row or skip rows when possible.
- Put up physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions, in areas where it is difficult for people to remain at least 6 feet apart. This may include lab areas or reception areas.
- Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to make sure that staff and children remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times. Teach children to stay 6 feet apart in line by stretching out their arms like airplane wings without touching the children in line next to them.
- Close shared spaces such as dining halls or cafeterias; otherwise, limit how many people can use the space at a time, and clean and disinfect often.
- Add physical barriers, such as plastic flexible screens, between restroom sinks especially when they cannot be at least 6 feet apart.



Food Service

It may not be possible for children to bring their own meals from home. When children cannot bring their own meals, it is best if individually boxed or plated meals are served in classrooms instead of a dining hall or cafeteria.

If students eat in the cafeteria, keeping students in a cohort, or small group, with only their own class is another option. Cohorts should stay the same and should stay separate from other classes. Students should still be physically distanced from one another. This can be accomplished by spreading out seating, or using a checkerboard seating arrangement.



Use food service items like utensils and plates or boxes that can be thrown away. If it is not possible to have food service items that can be thrown away, make sure all items are handled with gloves, and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher.

Food workers need to wash their hands prior to putting on gloves and serving meals. Food service staff should wash their hands after removing their gloves. They should also wash their hands after directly handling used food service items. Do not share food and utensils. It is still important to keep children with food allergies safe.

Nurse's Office

It is best to avoid using the school nurse's office for both those people who may have COVID-19 and those who have other needs. Schools should decide and let everyone know where children should go if they have symptoms of COVID-19. This waiting area should be a different space than where children go if they need medicine or have scrapes, bumps, or bruises.

Break space for staff should have good airflow or be outdoors when possible. Indoor spaces should be set up to have space between seating areas and should be cleaned and disinfected often. Limit how many staff are in a break area at any time in order to maintain physical distancing.

Bus Stops and Bussing

Students should stay six or more feet apart when they are waiting for the bus. Schools may decide to add more bus stops in order to have fewer students waiting at each bus stop.

Everyone on the bus should wear a face covering. Face coverings are very important in enclosed spaces where it is hard to be physically distanced.

Schools can reduce student capacity of buses to allow for spaced seating for bus riders.

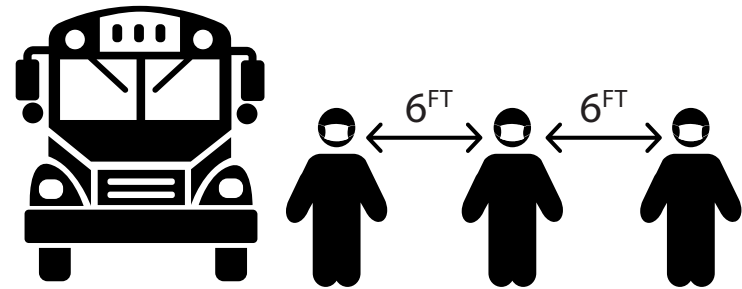
Drivers can create distance between children on school buses, including seating children one student per row facing forward and skipping rows between students. Students who live in the same household may sit together if needed. Schools may consider other ways to have fewer students in buses, such as staggered pick-up and drop-off times or additional bus routes.

Schools should consider having extra clean cloth face coverings available to make sure all students wear cloth face coverings on the school bus.

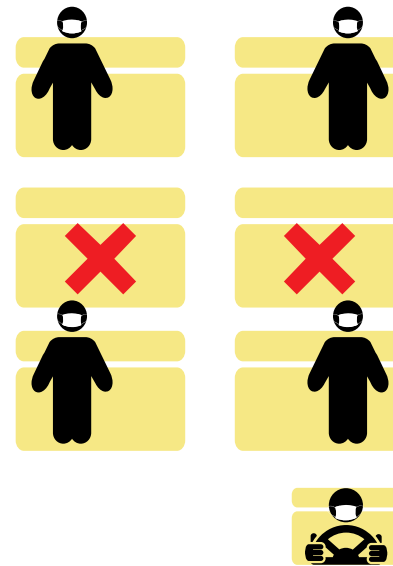


Buses should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily.

One child per seat is the goal. This helps keep children spaced out so the virus does not spread as easily. Assigned seats on a bus will help health workers figure out who may have sat near whom if a child gets sick with COVID-19. Leave windows on the bus down when the weather is good. This helps more air flow on the bus.



Students should stay six or more feet apart when they are waiting for the bus.



Drivers can create distance between children on school buses, including seating children one student per row facing forward or skipping rows between students.

Leave windows on the bus down when the weather is good.

Healthy Operations: How We Do It

There are a lot of creative and healthy ways schools can organize their operations.

Health Check (screening) Stations

Determine if staff will complete a health check before coming on campus. Maintain stations and/or display a health check sign at entrances. The Division of Secondary and Elementary Education has provided a screening tool in the Ready for Learning Guide that may be used.

Before coming to school, students should complete a health check at home. This means they should talk to a grown-up about how they feel, and the grown-up should look for signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

Anyone who feels sick should stay home.

Before students, administrators, educators and staff enter school, they should have a temperature check. Anyone with a temperature of 100.4°F or more should not enter the school building. Staggered drop-off schedules can help with this. It is best if temperature check stations are set up so that students and staff are 6 feet or more apart.

Some schools may decide to take students' temperatures while students are still in the car. Although taking temperatures at school is optimal, another way schools may decide to handle temperature checks is to allow parents to check the temperature prior to the student's arrival. Digital thermometers can be purchased that are fast, accurate, and no-touch.

Non-essential staff, visitors, volunteers, or parent volunteers should not be on-site. Having fewer people on campus helps make physical distancing and small groups (cohorts) easier for schools.



Drop-Off Process

- Use visual cues, signs, and barriers to direct traffic flow and reinforce distancing during the student drop-off process.
- Consider staggering drop-off times, or making drop-off time last longer, so there are fewer students arriving at the same time.
- Temperature checks and any final steps for screening should be completed outside if possible. Some schools may do this in the drop-off line before a child leaves a bus or car.
- Consider having more than one entry point, so that students aren't all trying to enter a building through one entrance.
- Consider keeping doors open during drop-off, so that students and staff do not have to touch them.
- Consider having drop-off at a playground or other outside location when the weather is good.

Identify Small Groups and Keep Them Together (Cohorts)

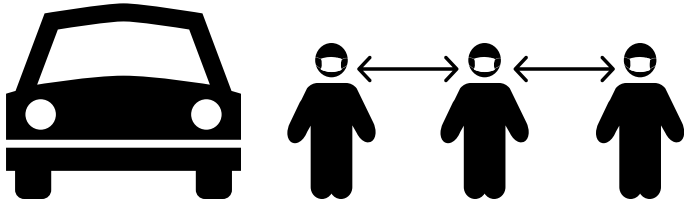
- Students and staff should be in small groups that keep the same children together as much as possible. The same group of children should stay with the same staff (all day for young children and as much as possible for older children).
- Limit group activities.
- Limit interaction between classes and groups.
- Teachers should move to each class, rather than students move from room to room, whenever possible.
- Tornado, fire, and active-shooter drills should be practiced one class at a time.

Staggered Scheduling

- Spread out arrival and drop-off times, or locations by groups, or put in place guidelines that limit contact between small groups.
- Limit direct contact with parents as much as possible.
- Whenever possible, student drop-off and pick-up should occur outside.
- Designate the same group of staff for drop-off and pick-up. Consider keeping staff with their small groups for drop-off and pick-up.
- When possible, use flexible worksites and flexible work hours to establish physical distancing between employees and others.
- Schedule restroom breaks to make sure there are fewer people in the restroom at a time.

Pick-Up Process

- During dismissal, schools may provide physical guides, such as signs and tape on the sidewalk, to make sure that students and school staff remain at least 6 feet apart while waiting for transportation.
- Consider giving more time for pick-up, using multiple exits for students to be picked up at, and staggering the times for pick-up to allow for physical distancing.



Extracurricular Activities

Many extracurricular activities, such as sports, choir, and band, have an increased risk for spreading the virus. In order to conduct these activities safely, they will be played, practiced, or performed very differently than in the past. Refer to the Arkansas Department of Health for more information on extracurricular activities as it is made available.

Gatherings, Visitors, and Field Trips

Large groups and close contact spread COVID-19.

It is best if large group gatherings do not happen. There are ways to limit the number of people who attend an event or to plan events where people connect in virtual ways. Any large gatherings that do occur outside of normal school day activities should follow the guidelines and direction put out by the Arkansas Department of Health.

In-person plans for gatherings should include ways that people can stay 6 feet or more away from each family group. There should be plans for cleaning hands and spaces and using face coverings.

Limit any extra visitors, volunteers, and activities from outside of the school.

Use virtual ways to connect for activities and events instead of field trips, student assemblies, special performances, school-wide parent meetings, and spirit nights.

Organize sporting events and participation in sports activities in ways that lower the chance that COVID-19 could be spread to players, families, coaches, and communities.

What to Do When Someone is Sick

If a student or staff member becomes sick while at school, they should go home and call their doctor to be seen for their illness and whether they need to be tested for COVID-19.

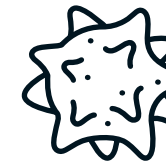
If it is a student who becomes sick, their parent or guardian should be contacted to come pick them up. They should wait in the school's designated room for people with possible COVID-19 symptoms.

If a student or staff member is tested for COVID-19 and the test is positive, they should let the school know right away. The school should then call the Arkansas Department of Health hotline at 1-833-504-0155. The health department will help the school figure out what needs to happen next, and who may need to be quarantined.

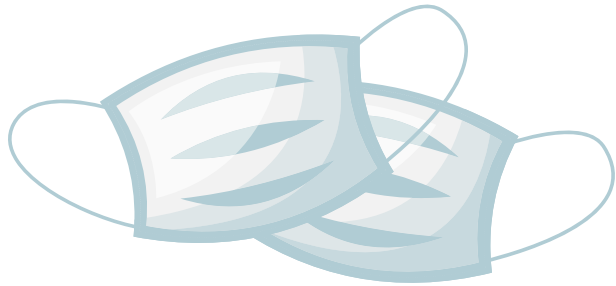
Anyone who has a positive COVID-19 test will be contacted by the Arkansas Department of Health once the positive result has been reported. There may be more than one person from the department who may contact you. People who have tested positive for COVID-19 should stay out of school and isolate until they are cleared to return by the Arkansas Department of Health. To isolate means to stay at home and away from other healthy people until you are better. For a young child, this will likely mean at least one parent will need to quarantine with the positive child, in order to take care of them.

If a person tests positive for COVID-19, it will be important to find out who else may have been exposed to the virus. People are considered exposed if they were in close contact with the person who tested positive. Close contact is, generally, within 6 feet of the positive person for 15 minutes or more. Someone who has been in close contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19 will be required to quarantine at home for 14 days after the last time they were around the positive person. Quarantine means that you should not leave your home to go anywhere during the 14 days you are home, unless you get very sick and need to go to the hospital.

Keeping students in small groups will help make sure that fewer students are exposed to the virus. This can help keep fewer students from having to quarantine when there is a person who tests positive.



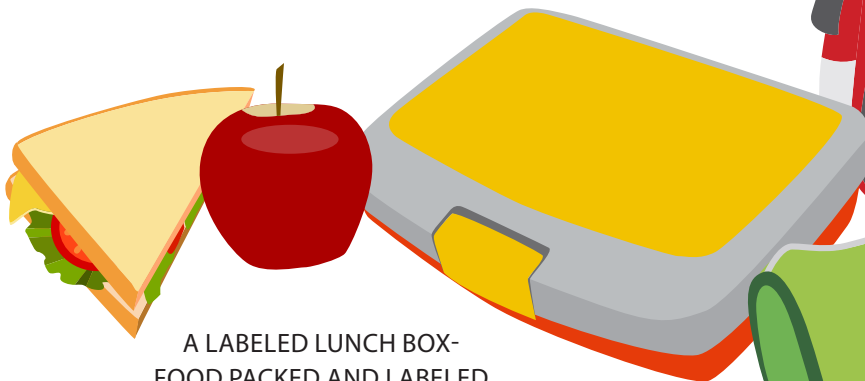
PREPARING FOR THE NEW SCHOOL DAY



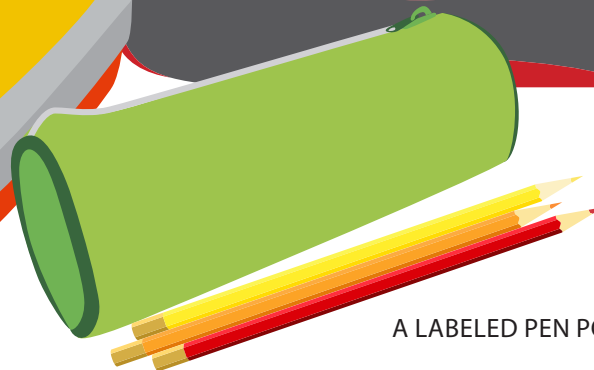
AN EXTRA MASK- MASK FOR WEARING ON THE BUS AND AT SCHOOL



HAND SANITIZER- CLEAN HANDS OFTEN



A LABELED LUNCH BOX- FOOD PACKED AND LABELED



A LABELED PEN POUCH- SCHOOL SUPPLIES THAT WON'T BE SHARED

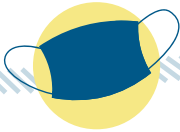


WATER BOTTLE FILLED AT HOME

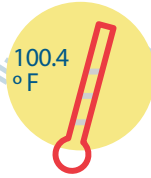
STEP-BY-STEP THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL DAY



At home, do a health check for symptoms of illness. Anyone who feels sick should stay home.



Head to school. If on a bus, keep away from others and wear a face covering.



Temperature check before entering school - 100.4° or more is a fever.



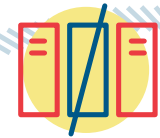
Go to class where desks are spaced at least 6 feet apart.



Open air offices like a front desk should have plexiglass or not be open.



Use water bottle filling stations or a sink.



Lockers should be staggered to avoid crowding.



Lunch should be outside or distanced.



Labs should have plexiglass barriers.



Use restrooms, paying careful attention to distancing and hand washing.

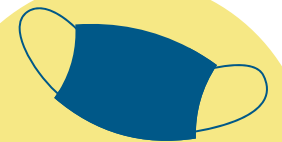


Pick-up in areas with markers for physical distance.

After-school activities planned with distancing in mind.

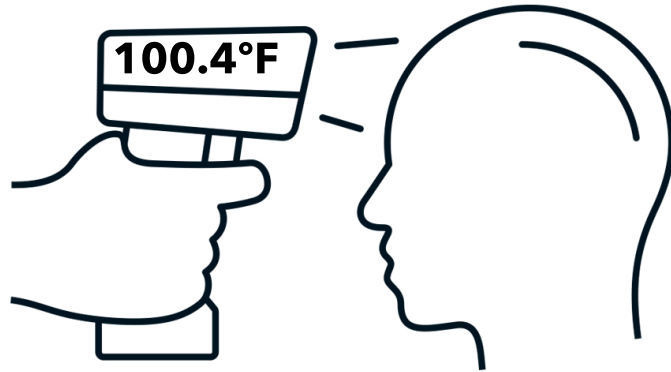


Back at home, family should check how a child feels each evening.

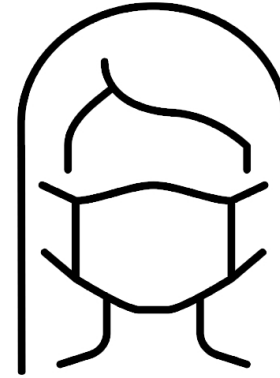


**WEAR
A FACE
COVERING
ALL DAY**

Protect Yourself from COVID-19



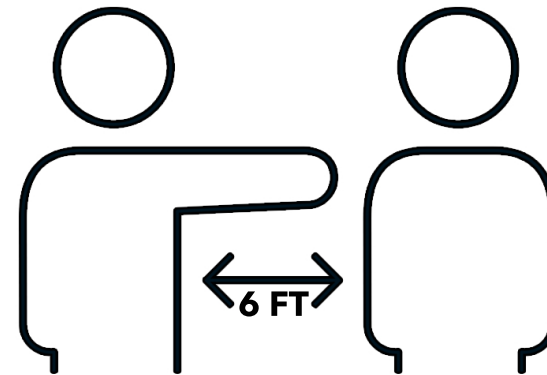
Health Check



Wear a Face Covering



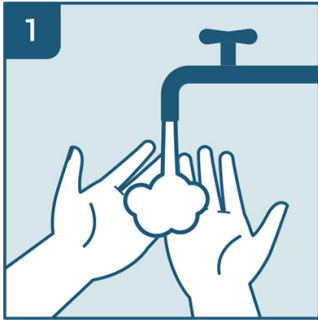
Clean Your Hands



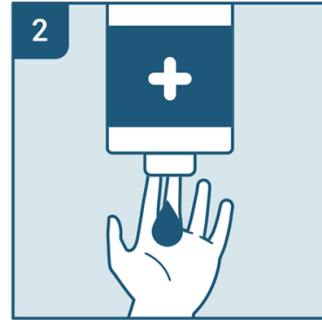
Stay Physically Distanced

How to Wash Your Hands Correctly

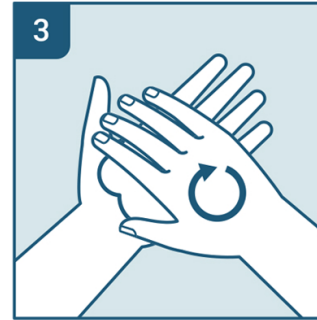
BE SURE TO WASH YOUR HANDS FOR 20 SECONDS.



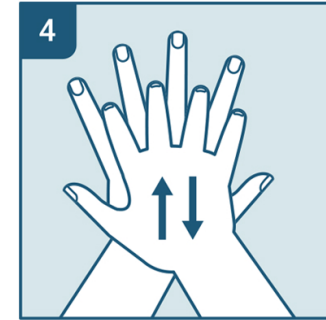
WET HANDS



APPLY SOAP



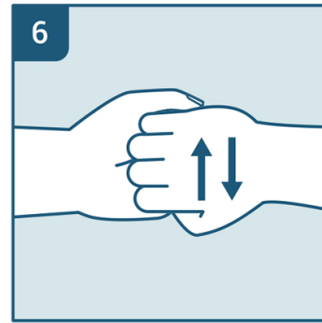
RUB HANDS
PALM TO PALM



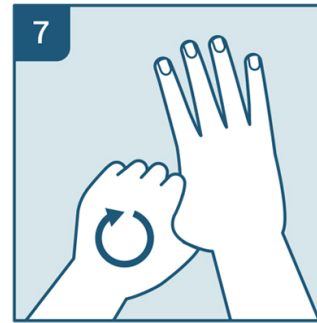
WASH THE BACKS
OF YOUR HANDS



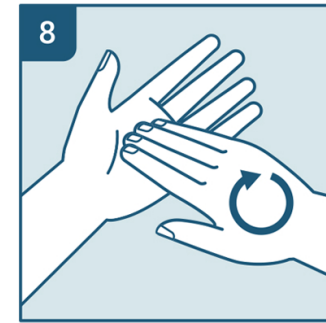
SCRUB BETWEEN
YOUR FINGERS



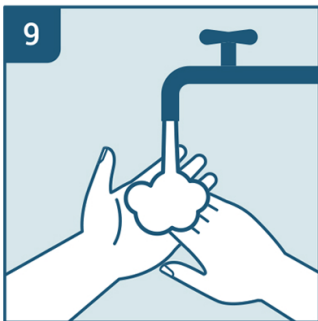
RUB THE BACKS OF
YOUR FINGERS



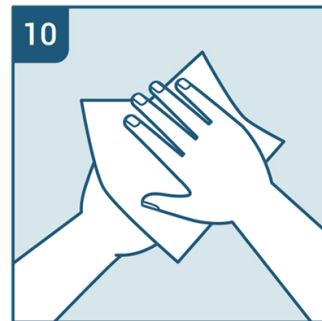
CLEAN YOUR
THUMBS



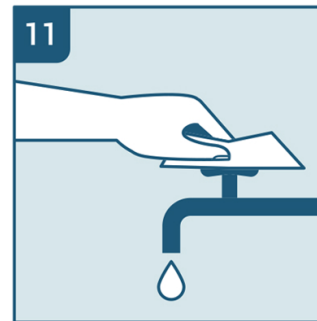
WASH YOUR
FINGERNAILS AND
FINGERTIPS



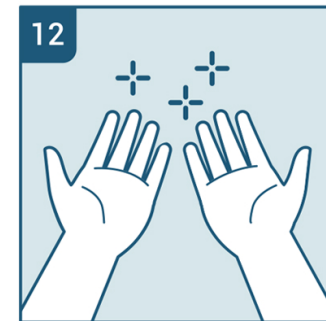
RINSE HANDS



DRY WITH A
TOWEL



USE THE TOWEL TO
TURN OF THE FAUCET



YOUR HANDS ARE
CLEAN!

Wear Your Face Covering Correctly

CLEAN YOUR HANDS BEFORE PUTTING ON YOUR FACE COVERING.

DO NOT PLACE A MASK ON A CHILD YOUNGER THAN 2.

DO NOT PUT A MASK ON ANYONE WHO HAS TROUBLE BREATHING OR CANNOT PUT IT ON OR TAKE IT OFF ON THEIR OWN.

Put it over your nose and mouth, and secure it under your chin.



Try to fit it snugly against the sides of your face.



Make sure you can breathe easily.



Arkansas K-12 Safe School Reopening Task Force

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DISCLAIMER

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Adherence to any recommendations included in this guide will not ensure successful results in every situation. Furthermore, the recommendations contained in this guide should not be interpreted as setting a standard of care, or be deemed inclusive of all proper methods of operations. There is no guarantee that following all of these recommendations will prevent transmission of COVID-19.