



David M. Bergman, MD, MPH, FAAP
Andrea McCullough-Hlobik, DO, FAAP
9570 Nesbit Ferry Rd. Suite 201
Alpharetta, GA 30022
770-640-8119 ph
770-988-5553 fax
www.thepediatricplace.com

Advice During Coronavirus Regarding Your Child's Return to Day Care/Preschool and Visiting Grandparents/Older Relatives

(updated May 7, 2020)

Coronavirus is spread in the following ways:

(1) directly through the air – a person is in close contact with someone who is sick and spreading the virus through coughing or breathing nearby; it is also known that some people spread the virus even though they have no symptoms, hence the reason for all the public health advice about social distancing and mask wearing

(2) by one's hands – a person may touch objects/surfaces that are contaminated with the virus or shake/high-5 someone else's hand which has the virus. Once the virus is on your own hands it is more likely that your hands will touch your eyes, nose, or mouth (places where the virus enters your body)

Is it safe to send my toddler/preschool child back to day care or preschool now?

The answer depends on weighing the risk of exposure and illness in your household with the need to return to work or provide your child healthy development around other children. Globally, young children have rarely developed severe Coronavirus illness. However, the risk to parents and grandparents for more severe illness is higher, especially if an adult has underlying chronic medical conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, chronic lung disease, kidney disease, cancer treatment, immune suppressing conditions or is taking medications that impair the immune system.

Look at your own family situation. If your child will be in regular close contact with an adult with any of the above medical concerns, or close contact with a more elderly or frail grandparent/relative (perhaps 65-70yo or older), then the risk of exposure may be too worrisome. If your child is primarily only exposed to healthy young parents then the risk is lower for the family.

If you decide to send your child to day care/preschool – take some precautions such as:

- (1) **Change clothing and wash hands** - when picking up your child from school, have your child change into clean clothes and generously soap hands or use hand sanitizer before entering your car; keep your child's dirty clothes in a sealed bag and immediately place in washing machine when returning home
- (2) **Wear a mask** – there is limited data to suggest that masks are essential to reduce virus transmission. Unfortunately, young children are more likely to touch their masks with their hands during the day which can contaminate their hands with germs. Currently, general common sense advice is for everyone over 2yo to wear a mask in public. It is unlikely that day cares/preschools will be able to always guarantee that your child has his/her mask on at all times during the school day. If your child is wearing a mask at school then make sure to also place the dirty mask inside the sealed dirty clothes bag before entering your car

Day Cares/Preschools will try to reduce the risk of Coronavirus transmission through the following measures – you can ask if these are being implemented at your child’s center:

- (1) Check every child’s temperature on arrival, preferably by use of an infrared forehead thermometer (no skin touching needed)
- (2) Frequent breaks for handwashing/hand sanitizer use by staff/children throughout the day
- (3) Limit the # of children allowed per classroom (each center will have to decide what they deem is safe based on classroom size/activities)
- (4) Increase outdoor playtime; viruses tend to spread more easily indoors by close contact
- (5) More frequent sanitation/cleaning by staff of all classrooms, lunchrooms, tables, doorknobs, toys, outdoor playgrounds, etc.
- (6) Implement a learning/education program for preschool children about how germs are spread; reinforce these concepts in a fun way each day

Is it safe for my child to visit an older grandparent/relative now?

Again, weigh the risks vs the benefits offered by these visits for emotional health and enjoyment or necessity. If an older relative is more medically frail/fragile (i.e. has limited mobility or has underlying chronic medical problems) then the risk is higher that an asymptomatic parent or child may transfer the virus and possibly cause this elderly person to become very ill

How can I reduce the risk to be able to visit a healthier grandparent/older relative?

- (1) Be sure anyone visiting has been healthy in the past 2 weeks
- (2) Limit the number of people visiting at one time (perhaps up to 3-4 people at one time)
- (3) Wear a face mask at all times when indoors; keep at least 6ft apart when outside or anytime a mask is not worn (i.e. meal times); eat meals preferably outdoors
- (4) Soap hands or use hand sanitizer frequently during visit; consider wearing clean gloves
- (5) Sanitize frequently any shared surfaces (particularly common areas such as kitchen and bathrooms)
- (6) Minimize indoor time; try to spend most/all visit time outdoors

Can my child hug his/her grandparent or older relatives?

If you decide to proceed with a visit, then YES but there is some risk of asymptomatic transfer of virus from person to person. Ideally, this risk would be even further reduced if everyone was wearing an N95 Mask as worn by hospital staff caring for Coronavirus patients (but these N95 masks are in shortage and extremely difficult to purchase at the moment).

If everyone is healthy at the time of the visit, have washed hands well, and wear masks (N95 preferably but other clean masks as an alternative) then proper precautions have been reasonably taken; it is my opinion that hugging and cuddling is fine in moderation and just as important for the grandparent’s/older relative’s emotional well-being as it is for your child