
Safe at School®: Going to School During a Pandemic & Mental Health Considerations

Did you know?

- Every child/adolescent responds to stress in different ways
- Children/adolescents may be at higher risk for worries, fears, and sadness due to:
 - Their risk for COVID-19 exposure/illness
 - A loved one's risk for COVID-19 exposure
 - Reintegrating into public settings (i.e., school) and reconnecting with peers
 - Falling behind due to time spent with virtual learning. This may lead to or exacerbate concerns regarding college applications/acceptances/ "gap" year in their education

Tips for Parents/Caregivers

- Understand the facts about **COVID-19** both in general and as it relates to children with diabetes so you can provide your child with accurate, age-appropriate information.
- Be an example! Model ways to minimize the risk for COVID-19 exposure.
- Find out how your child's school and teachers are promoting safety for students.
- Encourage your children to express their thoughts and feelings without judgment.
- Limit your child's exposure to the news and social media.
- Stress that we have made progress in the treatment of COVID-19—hospital stays are significantly lower, and adults are still working to keep them safe.
- Ensure your child's **504 Plan or Individualized Education Program (IEP)** is updated to address their current learning needs and COVID-19 safety. Allow older students to have an opinion on how to care for their diabetes in school.
- Review the 504 Plan or IEP accommodations with your child so they are aware and better prepared to self-advocate, if needed.
- Explore opportunities for peer interactions.
 - Ask your child's diabetes care team about peer support group opportunities.
 - Register your child for groups that promote social interaction and physical activity, such as:
 - **Project Power**
 - **Camp**
- Seek professional emotional support, including support from your child's school psychologist or school counselor, if needed. Alternative resources include referrals for therapy/counseling in your community and the **ADA Mental Health Provider Directory**.

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Tips for School Personnel

- Understand the facts so you can provide your student with accurate, age-appropriate information.
- Be an example! Model ways to minimize the risk for COVID-19 exposure.
- Ensure that 504 Plan or IEP accommodations are updated for students with diabetes to address their current learning needs.
- Promote non-academic social connections by providing students with brief, fun interactive activities. At the beginning of academic quarters/semesters, provide students with the opportunity to introduce themselves and engage in “ice breaker” activities.
- Seek and/or recommend emotional support from your school psychologist or school counselor, if needed.

Resources

Learn more about the relationship between COVID-19 and diabetes:

- diabetes.org/covid-19-faq
- diabetes.org/coronavirus-covid-19
- diabetes.org/sascovid

Read about ways to help children cope during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/talking-with-children

Back to school reminders:

- cdc.gov/parents/children/back-to-school

Tips for back to school during COVID-19:

- cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/p0823-back-to-school-covid-19

Find a mental health professional with knowledge about diabetes:

- professional.diabetes.org/MHP_listing

Learn more about **Safe at School**.

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