

Guidelines for Gatherings of Children and Youth While Schools are Closed

Updated 3/25/20



Whatcom County
HEALTH
Department



Following Governor Inslee's executive order on 3/23/20, this guidance has been revised to promote compliance with the Stay Home, Stay Healthy directive, as it relates to children and youth.

It is healthy for children to go for walks or bike rides, or to play in their own yards, but they must maintain a distance of at least six feet from all people they encounter while outside their homes.

A few general guidelines:

- If your child is sick, keep them home and separate them from others.
- Sick household members should separate from other people and animals and reach out to their healthcare provider with concerns. [Read more about what to do if you or your child has COVID-19-like symptoms \(fever, cough, shortness of breath\).](#)
- Respiratory hygiene habits go a long way. Teach your kids:
 - Cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash their hands.
 - [Wash hands often](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
 - Avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Don't share food, water bottles, utensils, or cups.
- Frequently clean high-touch surfaces, like doorknobs, toys, and keyboards. Everyday cleaning products are effective against COVID-19. [Learn more here.](#)

Can children and youth spend time together at all?

Yes! Social interaction is important to the mental health of young people. If appropriate for your teen, encourage them to connect over the phone, electronically, or using video chat.

Additional resources for children and families:

- [Talking with children about Coronavirus Disease 2019: Messages for parents, school staff, and others working with children \(CDC\)](#)
- [Just for Kids: A Comic Exploring the Novel Coronavirus \(NPR\)](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): How to Talk to Your Child](#) and [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): ¿Cómo hablar con su hijo sobre este virus?](#) (Kids Health from Nemours) also available in audio.