

Home Care for Children During This Pandemic

COVID 19 infection usually presents with mild illness in children, though some may develop more severe symptoms requiring hospitalization. Children with neurologic and developmental disorders, chronic kidney, heart and lung diseases and those who are obese, are among those that may develop more severe infection.

A. Home care may be recommended in the following situations.

1. If your child is diagnosed with mild COVID 19 infection with any of the following symptoms:
 - fever of less than or equal to 38°C
 - Cough
 - Colds
 - Diarrhea
 - Sore throat
 - Headache
 - Loss of smell or taste
 - Decrease in appetite
2. If your child was tested for COVID-19 due to exposure to a confirmed or probable COVID-19 patient and is waiting for the results
3. If your child has flu-like symptoms, such as fever, cough, and sore throat, and no test has been done yet. Even if you are not sure that your child has COVID-19, he/she should stay home unless medical care is needed. This will prevent the infection from spreading to other people.

B. What is the difference between quarantine and isolation?

- **Quarantine** is used for anyone who is a *close contact of a person with COVID-19*. Quarantine means that you remain separated from others because you have been exposed to the virus and you may be infected but may not have symptoms yet. This can take place in a designated facility or at home.
- **Isolation** is used for people with or without symptoms *who have tested positive for COVID-19 or with COVID-19 symptoms awaiting RT-PCR result*. Being in isolation means being separated from others, ideally in a medical facility where you can receive clinical care. If isolation in a medical facility is not possible and you are not in a high risk group of developing severe disease, isolation can take place at home in a separate room with its own bathroom.

C. What should I do at home?

1. Monitor:
 - a. Temperature every 4 hours
 - b. Oxygen level every 6 hours using a pulse oximeter. If not available, monitor for changes in the breathing pattern of the patient.
 - c. Frequency, volume and color of your child's urine/urination.
2. Encourage your child to rest.
3. Keep your child hydrated by giving plenty of fluids/water.
4. Use fever-reducing medications if your child has a fever.
5. Give age-appropriate healthy foods. Continue breastfeeding. Offer soft, varied foods that are easy to chew and swallow.

D. When should I call my child's pediatrician?

Inform your child's pediatrician if he/she has any of the following symptoms:

- persistent fever or fever of 38.1°C and above
- refuses to drink or eat
- ear pain or with fluid coming out of the ear
- runny or stuffy nose for 2 weeks or longer
- bad cough or chest pain
- persistent headache
- diarrhea
- breathing problems
- abdominal pain
- is getting sicker

E. When should I bring my child to the emergency room?

Bring your child to the emergency room if he/she:

- appears dehydrated; the signs include dizziness, drowsiness, a dry or sticky mouth, sunken eyes, crying with few or no tears, or peeing less often or having fewer wet diapers
- is unable to drink or talk
- is confused or drowsy
- has trouble breathing, is breathing fast, or looks pale or blue around the lips.
- has oxygen levels of less than 95% if using a pulse oximeter

F. How can I protect other household members?

1. Keep your sick child away from other people and pets in your home.
2. Your child should stay in a bedroom and use a bathroom separate from other people in the home or be at least 6 feet (2 meters) away from other people and pets.
3. Designate *only one person*, if possible, to care for the sick child so others are not exposed. Choose a healthy family member to care for your child.
4. Your child should wear a mask if with other household members. Choose a well-fitting and comfortable mask, the size of which should fit over the child's nose and under the chin but does not impair vision. A poorly fitting or uncomfortable mask might be worn incorrectly or removed often, which would reduce its intended benefits. Masks should not be worn by children younger than 2 years old or anyone who has trouble breathing or has severe mental disability. If they can't wear a facemask, you or the designated caregiver should wear one while in the same room with the child.
5. Everyone in the house should wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after contact with your child or if visibly dirty. You can also use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol to clean your hands if soap and water aren't available.
6. Everyone in the house should avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth unless they have just cleaned their hands.
7. Teach the child to cover his/her nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing and sneezing, throw the tissue away, and wash hands right away.
8. Use separate dishes, glasses, cups, and eating utensils and do not share these with other household members. After use, wear gloves and wash with hot soapy water.
9. Use separate beddings and towels.
10. Wash the sick child's clothing, bedding, and towels with detergent separately using hot water. If possible, wear gloves when handling their laundry. Wash your hands well after handling the laundry (even if you wore gloves).
11. Make sure shared spaces in the home have good air flow. You can open a window or turn on an air filter or air conditioner.
12. Do not allow visitors into your home. These include children and adults.
13. Every day, use a household cleaner or household bleach 1:100 dilution or (follow product recommendation, concentrations vary according to brand) to clean things that get touched a lot. These include doorknobs, light switches, toys, remote controls, sink handles, counters, refrigerator handles, phones and gadgets. Keep a sick child's toys separate from other toys, if possible.

G. How to protect others in your community:

1. All household members should also stay home and isolate/quarantine until after the criteria for stopping home isolation/quarantine are met.
2. Your sick child should stay home unless he/she needs to be brought to the hospital.

3. It is best that you inform your barangay for contact tracing and to help your household with basic needs such as groceries and food as well as medical needs.
4. Follow instructions from your doctor or local health care worker about whom should stay home and for how long.
5. If a hospital visit is needed:
 - Everyone should wear a mask and face shield.
 - Keep tissues handy in case they need to cough or sneeze.

H. When can we stop home isolation?

For children with mild symptoms, you can stop home isolation 10 days after symptom onset, inclusive of 3 days of being clinically recovered and asymptomatic.

I. Until when should we be disinfecting the isolation room once an infected child no longer needs to be separated from other household members?

Wait several hours before going outside the room to clean and disinfect.

If you need to clean the room *less than 24 hours* from the time an infected child has vacated it, clean as if he/she is still using the room for isolation. Wear a face mask when entering the room. Increase airflow by opening the windows and turning on the fan. Clean and disinfect the surfaces that he/she touched with a household cleaner or bleach.

If you will clean the room *after 24 hours but less than 3 days* from the time an infected child has left the room, clean the surfaces in the areas that he/she used. Disinfection is not needed.

If you will enter the room *after 3 days*, no additional cleaning aside from routine cleaning is needed.

J. What Else Should I Know?

If you are caring for a child who has COVID-19 or who has symptoms, keep taking these precautions until your doctor or local health worker say it's safe to stop doing so. Inform other people who may have been in close contact with the child with COVID-19. They can speak with their doctor or local health care worker about the need for testing or quarantine/isolation.

For those who had recent infection, COVID vaccine may be given as soon as the patient recovers from illness and has completed isolation.

For all children, update immunization after recovery.

Sources PIDSP, CDC and WHO