



# Newton-Wellesley Family Pediatrics

## August Newsletter

### The return to school debate

We know these are very stressful times, and many of you are facing the difficult - and fast-approaching - decision about whether to send your children to school, whether to choose a hybrid vs. remote model, and how to do so safely. *There is no one size fits all answer*, but as your pediatric medical home, we are here to be part of the conversation. Here are a few points to consider as you approach the next school year.



- **There is no one-size-fits all answer**. Ask your friends, ask your neighbors, ask us our thoughts - but also feel empowered to ultimately decide what you think is right for you and your family.
- Stay on top of the **trend of cases** in your community. In an ideal world, cases would be low in a community for it to be safe to return to school. This can change rapidly, so we recommended keeping up to date with the trend as things progress.
- **Ask your school if your decision is final**, or how difficult it would be to switch options, especially if community trends or your family situation changes.
- **Assess the health risk of your child** and anyone living in the home environment. Does anyone have medical conditions that put them at higher risk?
- Find out what the school's **mitigation plans** are. Are they following the CDC guidelines? Do they have the resources to do so? What are the teacher to student ratios? Is socially distancing, hand washing and wearing a mask feasible in their school?
- How did your child do with virtual classes in the spring? How much would they benefit from being in person vs. learning remotely? The spring gave us a little taste of what virtual learning longer term may be like for them.
- **Expect that things may change**. Make a plan that best fit your family now, but also know that you may need to be flexible. Expect that things may change rapidly and schools may have to change their plans, thus consider making a back-up plan or having things such as child-care in place if you needed to adapt.
- Additional things that you and your children can do to mitigate your risk and key principles to live by in this pandemic:
  - **Wash your hands**: frequently and well. Teach young children to sing a song in their head to help wash for an adequate amount of time.
  - **Wear a mask**. The CDC recommends that **all children over 2 years old wear a mask**. One of the main way children learn is by modeling - if they see you wearing mask, they are more likely to do so. It can also help to liken it to wearing a helmet or a seatbelt. Safety first.
  - **Socially distance**: 6 feet between individuals is recommended, and **outside is safer than inside**.
  - **Get your flu shot!** We recommend preventing any infections that we can amidst a pandemic. We expect to get them in the office in September. Stay tuned - check on our website, call or wait for the next newsletter blast.

Here are a few articles and tips:

- [AAP healthychildren.org article](https://www.aap.org/healthychildren/article.aspx?topic=2020-03-11) on returning to school
- [Mask myths](#)
- [Information about masks for children](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics statement on opening schools](#)
- [Plan, prepare and respond tips from CDC re school and childcare programs](#)
- CDC [considerations for schools](#)
- What we know by district in [Massachusetts](#)
- Mitigation strategies for schools, camps & daycares: [CDC School Guidelines](#) & [CDC mitigation strategies](#)
- Current data on COVID-19 in children: [CDC COVID-19 in Pediatrics](#)
- Recent words from Dr. Fauci in a [CNN article](#)
- AAP [return to sports](#) checklist

We all want our children back in schools for their social, emotional and academic development, but we want to do so safely. We know there are many factors at play and the decision is not easy. Do be reassured that children are remarkably adaptable, thus we encourage you to make the decision that best fits your whole family.

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## COVID Testing

We do not yet have testing capability in our office, *but we are hoping to have in-office testing in the near-future*. Stay tuned. In the meantime, here are some details regarding testing.

- **Where to get a test:**
    - [PDF](#) of all current test sites, this gets updated regularly on [mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov)
    - [Interactive map](#) of current testing sites
    - Newton-Wellesley Hospital has drive-through tent testing. A referral must be ordered by one of our providers and depending on demand it can take up to a week to get an appointment
  - **How quickly can I get a test?**
    - Depending on the site and demand, it can take up to a week to get a testing appointment at any of these sites. Thus, if you need one for clearance for school or travel, we recommend you call ahead of time to coordinate. If you think you need one more urgently, call us and we can determine the need to go to the ER for testing.
  - **Who needs a test?**
    - Anyone with [symptoms](#)
    - Anyone who travels and re-enters into Massachusetts unless they are from a low risk [state](#) both need a test and to fill out a travel form
    - Of note, the CDC recommendation is to quarantine for 14 days if you have been exposed even if you have a negative test within that time period. Isolation vs quarantine explained [here](#)
  - **[Stop the spread initiative:](#)**
    - This is a Massachusetts state-wide initiative that offers free testing to all residents in areas with high number of COVID cases. It is recommended that all residents regardless of symptoms or exposures get tested in these areas. Check [mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov) regularly for locations. The current towns include:
    - **Agawam, Brockton, Chelsea, Everett, Fall River, Framingham, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, Marlborough, Methuen, New Bedford, Randolph, Revere, Salem, Saugus, Springfield, Taunton, and Worcester.**
  - **Which test?**
    - There are [antigen, PCR and antibody tests](#). Antigen and PCR tests assess whether you actively have COVID. Antibody testing shows whether you were exposed. We still do not know if having antibodies means that you are immune, thus at this time it is not widely recommended as the CDC recommends following the same general guidelines.
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# COVID-19 Office Update Reminders

## Ongoing Temporary Office Policies:

- Please arrive **15 minutes in advance**. Only main entrances are open and the hospital is screening everyone that enters, thus it may take a few minutes longer to get up to our office. Masks are available upon entry to the hospital.
- **Check in from your car**. We encourage all families to call our office when you arrive so that we can ensure a room is ready. We can run any payments over the phone. We may ask you to wait in your car until a room is ready in order to avoid spending time in our waiting room.
- **Separate entrance and exit**. All patients will enter our office through the usual entrance, and will be directed to leave through a separate back entrance.
- Parents and guardians of **patients 13 years and older** may be excused towards the end of the visit in order to give your child some confidential time with their provider. During this time we ask that you return to your car to avoid extra exposure in our waiting room. Please be available by phone in case we need to reach you.
- We ask that **one caregiver**, and no siblings, accompany patients and **everyone above the age of 2 years old** wear a mask at all times.
- We will continue to separate well child visits from sick visits, and the majority of sick visits will be conducted via telehealth at this time. Adhering to the above guidelines can help protect you and others during your in-person visit.

## Well Visits:

- As of **June 1**, we expanded our in-person visits to: **well checks of all ages**.
- We will continue to offer **well visits for all ages** via **telehealth if you prefer**. Please call the office to schedule. You will need to be signed up for MyChart. If you are able, please obtain a weight and height and fill out any screening questionnaires assigned via MyChart.

## Sick Visits:

- We are seeing a limited number of **sick visits in the office in the afternoon** (prioritized towards necessary in-person exams and towards diagnoses that may require **antibiotic treatment**).
- We continue to offer telemedicine for sick visits as well throughout the day.
- COVID-19 testing is now available by appointment-only at the Newton-Wellesley Hospital testing tent. Please call us to determine if your child meets criteria for testing.
- **To find a testing site closer to your home, check local sites on [mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov)**
- *Please note, **telemedicine visits and telephone calls** are billed to your insurance company just as in-office visits are. Depending on your coverage, there may be some patient responsibility.*

If you or anyone in your family has symptoms of COVID or known exposure to a COVID case, **please call our office before your appointment** to discuss the safety of coming in. Our office will be calling to confirm your appointment and ask you screening questions 24 hours prior to your visit.

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## Useful Links:



**[Fever dosing links](#)**

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