

UN, Red Cross say keeping kids in school could help fight virus

March 10 2020



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UN bodies and the Red Cross said Tuesday that keeping schools open

could help combat the spread of the new coronavirus by educating children on preventative measures.

The World Health Organization, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the UN children's agency issued downloadable new guidance to help protect children against the virus.

While stopping short of recommending that schools be kept open, the guidelines stressed that "education can encourage students to become advocates for [disease prevention](#) and control at home, in school, and in their community by talking to others about how to prevent the spread of viruses."

The organisations pointed out that safe school guidelines implemented in west Africa during the 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak helped prevent school-based transmissions of the virus.

The guidance provided checklists for schools and advice for authorities on implementing emergency plans.

UNICEF urged schools to give students information on hand-washing, avoiding touching the face and coughing or sneezing into a tissue or the elbow.

It said children should be kept away from school if they are ill.

If schools close, remote learning options such as radio broadcasts of academic content should be considered so children can keep learning at home, the organisations said.

Where schools remain open, they should clean and disinfect buildings, especially sanitation and water facilities, and increase ventilation.

"Maintaining safe school operations or reopening schools after a closure requires many considerations, but, if done well, can promote public health," the organisations said in a statement.

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Citation: UN, Red Cross say keeping kids in school could help fight virus (2020, March 10)
retrieved 25 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-03-red-kids-school-virus.html>

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