

# Reducing viral infection risks when sending kids off to school

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It's back to school for many kids around the nation. And once they hit the classroom, you may notice more runny noses and other symptoms associated with viral and bacterial infections.

Dr. Nipunie Rajapakse, a pediatric infectious diseases physician with the Mayo Clinic Children's Center, says you might not be able to stop some of these illnesses, but reducing viral infection risks is possible.

Kids returning to [school](#) at the end of summer often coincides with the start of the respiratory virus season.

"You've got [kids](#) from lots of different households who are now coming together in a relatively confined space of a classroom," says Dr. Rajapakse.

And sharing more than their lunches. They are sharing viruses they've been exposed to at home. Dr. Rajapakse says some [childhood illnesses](#) are inevitable, but there are things families can do to reduce risks.

"Making sure that your [child](#)'s vaccines are up to date before they return to school is great, helps prevent things like influenza, COVID, other respiratory infections especially," she says.

Teach your child when and how to wash their hands. Use [warm water](#) with soap for 30 seconds before eating, after using the bathroom, and after sneezing or coughing.

It helps prevent the spread of germs that can make them and others sick.

And keep them home if they do become sick.

"If your child has an illness that is likely something that's contagious to others, the best thing to do is to keep them home until they're feeling well," Dr. Rajapakse says.

## **Reducing viral infection risk**

Viruses are responsible for causing many illnesses. There are some easy ways to prevent these [viral infections](#) by following some simple tactics.

- Practice good hand hygiene.

- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Stay home if you're sick.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are touched often.
- Avoid contaminated food and water

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