

**PRESS RELEASE from the Northwest Louisiana Pediatric Society regarding COVID-19**

March 16, 2020

The **Northwest Louisiana Pediatric Society** represents over 150 healthcare providers who provide medical care for children and families in Louisiana, Arkansas and Texas. In order to address the concerns of many families, we are providing this guidance to help keep children and families healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidance may change as conditions change and more information becomes available. Parents should stay informed by visiting the local and national resources listed below.

Data from many countries confirms that the COVID-19 virus is easily transmitted from person-to-person and that illness due to COVID-19 is generally of mild to moderate severity, causing serious illness primarily in older individuals and those with chronic medical conditions.

Most important right now is to try to reduce the number of people infected with COVID-19. Based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) guidelines, and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), we recommend the following as reasonable and prudent measures to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection:

- 1. Children should be reassured that COVID-19 infection is very rarely serious in children.**
- 2. Parents or other caregivers should evaluate the health of each child on a daily basis so that those who develop symptoms of a respiratory illness can be monitored closely.**
- 3. Key measures for personal protection include:**
  - a. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer. Look for one that is 60% or higher alcohol-based. This is especially important when returning home.
  - b. Keep your kids away from others who are sick or keep them home if they are ill.
  - c. Teach kids to cough and sneeze into a tissue (make sure to throw it away after each use!) or to cough and sneeze into their arm or elbow, not their hands.
  - d. Clean and disinfect your home as usual using regular household cleaning sprays or wipes.
  - e. Avoid touching your face; teach your children to do the same.
  - f. Avoid travel to highly infected areas.
  - g. Reduce unnecessary contact with others:
    - i. Minimize the need for trips to the stores and other public settings.
- 4. If your child is sick with respiratory symptoms:**
  - a. Contact their primary care provider to discuss their symptoms and to determine whether the child should be evaluated in a clinic or urgent care setting or stay home to be monitored.
  - b. Be sure to tell your pediatrician if your child has been exposed to someone with COVID-19 disease.
  - c. Keep them at home except for medical evaluations.
  - d. Expect that you and other family members will likely get sick within a few days and plan accordingly.
- 5. For children at home due to school closure, try to keep their days as routine and scheduled as possible. Here are a few tips that can help:**
  - a. **Maintain assignments and other activities provided by their school.**
  - b. **For younger children:**

- i. **Read books with your child.** It's not only fun, but reading together strengthens your bond with your child AND helps their development.
    - ii. **Make time for active play.** Bring out the blocks, balls, jump ropes and buckets and let the creativity go. Play games that kids of all ages can play, like tag or duck duck goose. Let your kids make up new games. Encourage older kids to make up a workout or dance to keep them moving.
  - c. **Keep an eye on media time.** Whenever possible, play video games or go online with your child to keep that time structured and limited. If kids are missing their school friends or other family, try video chats to stay in touch.
- 6. During the time that school is out, the following measures are recommended to limit the spread of COVID-19 in the community:**
- a. Limit person-to-person contact to 2-3 friends as long as all members of all households have no symptoms of respiratory illness. Many families will need to be in direct contact with others in order to share resources such as internet access, meals, childcare, etc. This is reasonable as long as all are healthy.
  - b. Families and children should not be interacting directly with multiple different “friend groups” or participating in “day camps” or other gatherings of larger numbers of people, including trips to the Mall and children’s entertainment venues.
  - c. If you choose to dine at a restaurant, be aware that commonly used items on the table and the tabletop could be contaminated. Routine restaurant cleaning methods should be adequate to clean surfaces such as tables, chairs and countertops, as well as utensils. Frequent handwashing or use of an alcohol-based sanitizer is encouraged whenever you are in a public place. “Takeout/delivery” options are recommended to reduce risk of COVID-19 infection.
  - d. Families with persons living in the home who are at increased risk for severe COVID-19 disease should attempt to minimize community-based activities.
  - e. Visitation to nursing home residents and hospital patients should be minimized in order to reduce the likelihood of infection to those with the highest risk of serious or fatal disease.
  - f. Reschedule non-essential travel, including vacations.
- 7. The American Academy of Pediatrics encourages parents and others who work closely with children to filter information and talk about it in a way that their child can understand. These tips can help:**
- a. **Simple reassurance.** Remind children that researchers and doctors are learning as much as they can, as quickly as they can, about the virus and are taking steps to keep everyone safe.
  - b. **Give them control.** It's also a great time to remind your children of what they can do to help – washing their hands often, coughing into a tissue or their sleeves, and getting enough sleep.
  - c. **Watch for signs of anxiety.** Children may not have the words to express their worry, but you may see signs of it. They may get cranky, be more clingy, have trouble sleeping, or seem distracted. Keep the reassurance going and try to stick to your normal routines.
  - d. **Monitor their media.** Keep young children away from frightening images they may see on TV, social media, computers, etc. For older children, talk together about what they are hearing on the news and correct any misinformation or rumors you may hear.
  - e. **Be a good role model.** COVID-19 doesn't discriminate and neither should we. While COVID-19 started in Wuhan, China, it doesn't mean that having Asian ancestry – or any other ancestry – makes someone more susceptible to the virus or more contagious. Stigma and discrimination

hurt everyone by creating fear or anger towards others. When you show empathy and support to those who are ill, your children will too.

8. Keep up to date on local health information using social media contacts with your primary care provider and local news organizations.
9. Keep up to date on school information via your child's school webpage or social media sties.
10. As things progress over the next several weeks, utilize CDC and LDH websites for updates at the state and national level. Things are changing rapidly in many areas of the country.
11. An excellent resource for parents has been created by the National Child Trauma Stress Network and can be found at: <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/parent-caregiver-guide-to-helping-families-cope-with-the-coronavirus-disease-2019>
  - a. This resource provides specific suggestions on how parents can help children of different ages cope with the stresses and frustrations of the COVID19 pandemic.
12. Several additional resources for families related to COVID-19 include:

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

CDC: information on children and COVID 2019: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/children-faq.html>

<https://healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/2019-Novel-Coronavirus.aspx>

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