



Guidelines for School Conversations about COVID-19

Although Santa Barbara County has come a long way in its battle against COVID-19, the virus continues to be a concern. We all still need to work together to move through to the lowest level of restrictions and then all the way to all-clear. Until then, we all need to continue to be vigilant about wearing masks, washing hands and social distancing.

Below are a few questions to invite students into a conversation around COVID-19. Standard answers (and sources) are provided. The goal is to remind kids of things they already know and to let them know that these things continue to be important. Only by *working* together can we finally all *be* together!

Begin with a discussion about what is COVID-19.

1. What is COVID-19 and when did it begin?

- COVID-19 is a coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses that are common among animals. In rare cases, they are what scientists call zoonotic, meaning they can be transmitted from animals to humans. We don't know exactly when this virus went from impacting animals to people.

2. What is a virus?

- Viruses can cause diseases and are so small you can't see it with an ordinary microscope. They can live inside animals, plants and people. There are a lot of different kinds of viruses, some can make us a little bit sick - like colds - but some can make people very sick. Over the course of your life, you have received vaccinations or shots that help keep you from getting many of the viruses that can be dangerous for people.

3. What are some of the main symptoms of COVID-19?

- COVID-19 is a new kind of Coronavirus; there are other Coronaviruses that just cause a regular cold. The most common symptoms from COVID-19 include a runny nose, cough, sore throat, possibly a headache and maybe a fever, which can last for a couple of days. Some people cannot smell or taste anything.



4. Is COVID-19 dangerous?

People with COVID-19 can have no symptoms, mild symptoms, or serious illness which requires treatment in a hospital. In some cases, COVID-19 illness can lead to death.

5. What are the ways we stay safe and protect others from COVID-19?

- We can protect ourselves from getting sick with viruses like COVID-19 by doing a few key things:
 - Wear a mask to keep from spreading little droplets from our mouths to others.
 - Wash our hands frequently with soap regularly for at least 20 seconds.
 - COVID-19 is spread through contact, so try to keep our hands away from our face (nose, mouth, and eyes).
 - Keep space between ourselves and other people.
 - Don't gather with people we don't live with.

Source: CDC, [How to Protect Yourself & Others](#). 2020

6. Who does wearing a mask protect?

- Wearing a mask is meant to protect other people in case *you* have the virus. Wearing a mask traps the droplets you produce when you sneeze, cough, or accidentally spit, from traveling into someone else's space.
- Wearing a mask can help protect you too, by blocking infected droplets from coming in through your nose and mouth.

Misconceptions: A misconceptions is that wearing a mask does not help you in any way. Wearing a mask reduces your chances of catching the virus by blocking some of the droplets you come into contact with.

Sources: CDC, [How to Protect Yourself & Others](#). 2020 and UCSF, [Still Confused About Masks? Here's the Science Behind How Face Masks Prevent Coronavirus](#). 2020



7. When should you wash your hands?

- You should wash your hands with soap often, for a minimum of 20 seconds. Focus on washing:
 - Before eating or making food
 - Before touching your face
 - After using the restroom
 - After leaving a public place
 - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
 - After touching your mask

If you don't have access to soap and water, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Sources: CDC, [How to Protect Yourself & Others](#). 2020

8. Let's talk some more about the symptoms of COVID-19. What are some symptoms to be aware of?

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose

- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Not everyone that has tested positive for COVID has had all the symptoms. These are just *some* of the symptoms that have been reported by people who have had COVID.



For example, if you don't have a fever but you do have cough, shortness of breath, and a sore throat – you could still be infected with the virus.

If you have one of these symptoms, it doesn't automatically mean you have COVID, but you should stay home if you feel sick.

Source: CDC: [Symptoms of Coronavirus](#). 2020

9. Which groups are particularly at risk? How could we help them?

Older adults and people who have severe underlying medical conditions like heart, lung disease or diabetes are at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness.

We can help them by properly washing our hands, wearing our masks, keeping 6 feet distance with everyone, and staying home if you feel sick.

Sources: CDC, [Stop the Spread of Rumors](#) and [How to Protect Yourself & Others](#). 2020

10. What fun things can we still do while social distancing?

- Pretend the floor is hot...lava (middle school)
- Have a dance party with your family (middle school)
- Netflix Party (Google Chrome extension to watch your favorite movies with your friends virtually)
- Check out virtual tours of colleges (high school)
- Go hiking or biking
- Read a book
- Write fan fiction
- Make playlists – share with friends!

11. What other important people wear masks? Why?

- Doctors in the ER – to protect patient and themselves from bacteria
- Nurses
- Dentists
- Firefighters – to block smoke particles



- Lab workers/scientists - to prevent cross-contamination
- Forensic Examiners
- LeBron James
- Duchess of Sussex - Meghan Markle
- Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez - Member of the U.S House of Representatives - NY
- Serena Williams
- Charli D'Amelio
- Justin Bieber
- King Felipe and Queen Letizia of Spain
- Harry Styles

To protect themselves and others, and to encourage others to do the same!