

# Supporting children's mental wellness while encouraging pandemic prevention measures

*How can I help my child to prepare for the new safety protocols that will be in place when they return to school? I guess what I'm struggling with is the fact that the situation is constantly changing. Won't they find it confusing if the "rules" that are in place keep changing over time?*

It will be a bit confusing—for them and for us! All of us are having to adjust to the fact that the situation is likely to continue to evolve over time. But one thing we know for certain is that things are going to be different this year. Students who return to school in-person can expect to see changes in almost all parts of the school day.

## Practice

Even if your child is already familiar with these procedures, practice them until they become second nature—things like washing your hands, wearing a mask, and maintaining physical distancing. If they are able to visit the school before it opens, it may be helpful for them to see the new set-up.



## Prepare

Help your child to figure out what they will need to do in order to comply with these measures: for example, making a plan for packing, storing, and cleaning any masks that will be accompanying them to school; and coming up with a strategy for storing sanitizer in a consistent spot if they will be carrying that backpack to school.



## Talk

Give your child a chance to talk about how they expect things to go at school—what they're looking forward to, what they might be worried about (perhaps staying safe or not being allowed to interact with a friend in another class), and what they need from you right now.

## Support

As you have these ongoing conversations, you'll want to read between the lines to try to pinpoint the underlying worry or worries. Sometimes what they're wondering about is less about a particular rule and more about whether or not they're going to be okay. That's where they'd benefit from some additional love and support from you.

## Read more!

Check out CMHO's **Back to School Mental Health Kit** for more information and resources. [CMHO.org/Back-to-School](https://cmho.org/back-to-school)



## Find Help

Children's Mental Health Ontario has 4,000 child and youth mental healthcare workers across Ontario ready to help parents and their children. Depending on your needs, we can connect you to child mental health professionals that will most help you and your family, including psychiatrists, therapists, and psychologists.