

# Your guide to a safer classroom.

---

Tips on handling COVID-19  
and resources from Highmark.

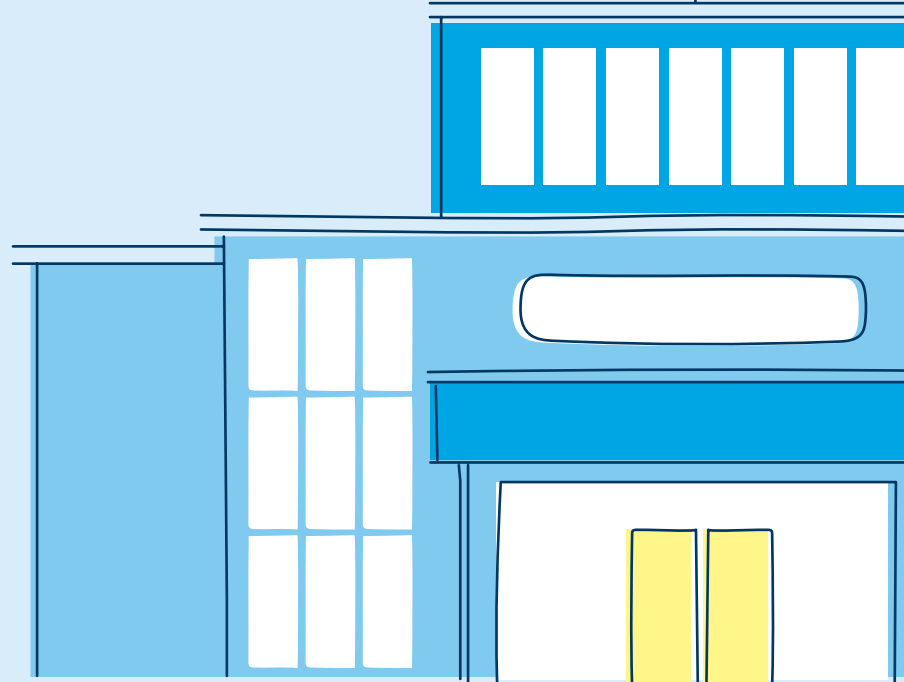
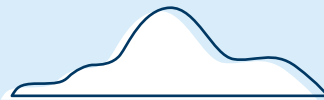


# Last year was certainly different and this year will be too.

One thing that hasn't changed: your commitment to going above and beyond for your students. Highmark is here to help.

Inside this guide, you'll find guidance on handling COVID-19, tips for speaking to students about safety protocols, an FAQ on COVID-19, plus additional resources for you to use.

Let's make the most of this school year. You're doing remarkable work.



# Handling COVID-19

Here's what to look out for in yourself and others.

## Common symptoms

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Temperature greater than 100.4 degrees
- Chills or repeated shaking with chills
- Sore throat
- New loss of smell or taste

If you believe one of your students is showing these symptoms, send them to the nurse immediately. Stay calm and remember that many common illnesses — like ear infections and strep throat — display similar symptoms.



If you begin to feel any of these symptoms, or think you were exposed to COVID-19, do not hesitate to follow your district's protocols. It's always better to err on the side of caution.

**NOTE:** COVID-19 screenings and protocols could change over time, and may vary by state or even county. Be on the lookout for communications from your district on any potential changes.

# Talking to your students about your school's rules.



## Face masks

- Chat with your students about the benefits of a face mask. Explain that masks help to slow the spread of COVID-19 and are especially important in protecting vulnerable groups — like their grandparents.
- Reiterate the importance of covering their noses and mouths with the face mask.
- Tell students they must follow the rules your school has established.
- To be extra careful, instruct students to sneeze or cough into their elbows even while wearing a face mask. Be sure students know not to touch their face, too.

## Handwashing

- Viruses can easily jump from hands to the mouth, nose, and eyes. Talk to students about how handwashing is key in keeping them healthy.
- Give students handwashing tips such as washing their hands with warm water and soap for up to 20 seconds. If they're not near a sink, point out hand sanitizer stations within the school.
- Encourage handwashing breaks frequently throughout the day, especially before eating.

## Social distancing

- The recommendation for social distancing is now 3 feet instead of 6 feet. Proper social distancing is still extremely important to contain COVID-19.
- One way to allow for social distancing is to space out desks within your classroom and have all students face the same direction.
- Encourage students to space out in the hallways and not to congregate in the bathrooms or by lockers.

## A few simple tricks to make these rules stick.

If you're an elementary education teacher, stressing the importance of the new safety rules may be difficult.

To further drive home the safety steps, consider teaching these catchy call and repeat chants and rhyme schemes.

### Call and repeat chants

Using the school signage as inspiration, lead the students through these call and repeat chants. You say the first line and have the students answer back to you.

**TEACHER:** Back in school.

**CLASS:** Safety rules.

**TEACHER:** In your class?

**CLASS:** Wear your mask.

**TEACHER:** Keep us stronger.

**CLASS:** Wash hands longer.

**TEACHER:** Be consistent.

**CLASS:** Keep your distance.

### Rhyme schemes

These singsongy phrases will help students remember safety tips and encourage proper behaviors.

#### HANDWASHING

Fronts and backs  
and in between,  
count up to 20,  
your hands are clean.

#### MASK WEARING

Above the nose,  
below the chin,  
wear masks right,  
and we all win.

#### SOCIAL DISTANCING

It's hard to keep  
apart from friends,  
but stay spaced out  
so COVID ends.

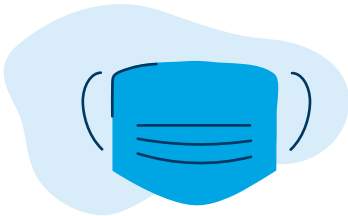


## No matter what you're doing, follow these safety steps:



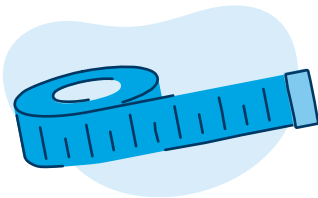
**Wash or sanitize your hands frequently.** When washing, do so for at least 20 seconds with soap and hot water.

---



**Wear a face covering** any time you're around students or other adults if your school requires it.

---



**Practice social distancing,** staying at least 3 feet away from others.

---



**Don't touch your face,** especially your eyes, nose, and mouth.

---



**Clean and disinfect** commonly touched surfaces frequently, like classroom desks and your computer.

# Three common questions about COVID-19.

## How does COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 spreads when an infected person breathes out droplets and very small particles that contain the virus. This happens when they talk, yell, sneeze, cough, or sing. When people nearby breathe in these droplets and particles, they can become infected. In some cases, the virus also spreads when droplets and particles land on a surface that people touch.

## What is a variant and what does it have to do with COVID-19?

Viruses constantly change through mutation. When this happens, the mutated virus is called a variant. Sometimes new variants emerge and disappear. Other times, new variants persist.

Scientists have found many variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 in the U.S. and around the world. Some variations allow the virus to spread more easily or make it resistant to treatments or vaccines.

## Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. The COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Check out our resources we've created based on the latest research and studies. We hope they help you make an informed decision about vaccination.

[highmark.com/employer/client-resources/coronavirus/vaccine-toolkit.html](https://highmark.com/employer/client-resources/coronavirus/vaccine-toolkit.html)



# Highmark is here to help.

---

Things are still changing constantly, and we know how frustrating that can be. Make sure you're managing your stress and taking care of yourself. Do your best to get a good night's sleep, exercise when you can, and chat with friends and family.

These resources can help you navigate challenges during the upcoming school year — as can your school administrators.

## Be calm. Be safe. Have a wonderful year.

- **Highmark Answers:** Visit [highmarkanswers.com](https://highmarkanswers.com) for your one-stop-shop for all information related to Coronavirus — there's even a helpful symptom checker.
- **Highmark Community Support:** Visit [highmark.auntbertha.com](https://highmark.auntbertha.com) to access this free, online tool that connects you to local social service programs, like food banks, housing, behavioral health support, and other community services.
- **CDC:** Visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus) for a variety of tools — from ways to protect yourself to school screening details.

