

Advice for Schools and Families on Medical Vulnerability during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

This advice from the Victorian Chief Health Officer provides guidance in relation to students with medical conditions and students living with medically vulnerable members of the community.

Advice from the Victorian Chief Health Officer



As Victoria's Chief Health Officer and as a member of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee, and with the health, wellbeing and safety of students and staff front of mind, I fully endorse a return to onsite schooling for all Victorian schools. [Health and safety advice for returning to onsite learning in the context of COVID-19](#) is available to support schools to continue to provide safe teaching and learning environments for staff and students.

The available evidence largely indicates that transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) between children in the school environment at the current time is very low and that the virus is generally milder in children than in adults.

Caution continues to be advised for students with complex medical needs. It is recommended that parents/carers of students with complex medical needs seek advice from the student's medical practitioner to support decision-making about whether onsite education is suitable. It is important, however, that clinical risk be weighed against the consequences of a student missing the opportunity for face-to-face learning, particularly in the context of very low rates of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission in Victoria.

Understanding risk and making informed decisions

An individual assessment is always recommended and decisions regarding school attendance should be informed by the nature of a child or young person's condition, its severity and intensity of required treatment. The presence of common conditions of childhood, such as asthma, epilepsy or Type 1 diabetes, in most cases should not preclude a student from attending face-to-face learning.

In keeping with national expert public health advice, people with a medically diagnosed compromised immune system may be at increased risk of the complications of coronavirus (COVID-19). Such an occurrence is rare in children. As a result, it should be an uncommon event for a child to be determined by a medical practitioner to be unable to return to school due to an ongoing medical reason raising concerns about coronavirus (COVID-19), outside of an acute illness.

Students who live with medically vulnerable members of the community

The risk of transmission in the school environment at the current time is very low. It is not recommended that students who live with someone who is [at risk](#) of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) remain at home at this time. Schools have put in place a range of measures to further reduce the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission and have clear protocols in place to quickly respond and manage a case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in a school.



Adj Clin Prof Brett Sutton
Victorian Chief Health Officer

Operational guidance

Continuity of education

The CECV has communicated resources and guidance for schools, parents and carers should remote and flexible learning programs be required to continue in your school. Please see previous [COVID-19 updates](#) on the CEVN website.

Managing and supporting students

Schools should ensure students with additional medical needs have an up-to-date health support plan and accompanying condition-specific health management plan (such as an [Asthma Care Plan](#)), based on:

- medical advice from the student's medical/health practitioner
- consultation with the student and parents/carers.

Additional information to support decision-making

- [Asthma Australia](#)
- [Royal Children's Hospital – advice for respiratory patients](#)
- [JDRF – Coronavirus and children with Type 1 diabetes](#)