

CAUTIOUS TORTOISE



In Aesop's fable, the tortoise who keeps moving forward by taking slow and steady steps succeeds over the hare who races ahead. From what we know about conditions triggered by a virus, it is wise to take a cautious approach to recovery.

Watch for signs or symptoms that your child is not yet back to full health and modify activities accordingly. The Cautious Tortoise flowchart makes suggestions for identifying when it is appropriate to take the next step back to activities, guided by an adaptive pacing approach.

Are you concerned that your child might have COVID-19?

Continue with daily life
Mitigations such as facemasks, good ventilation, space and handwashing are recommended as public health measures when dealing with an airborne virus. Use outdoor spaces when possible. Guidance on the use of these measures may vary. Where possible, take control of mitigations for you and your child to reduce risk.

Get a test
Children can be asymptomatic, have one or more classic symptoms, or have a range of non-specific symptoms.
Always think COVID-19. This is especially important when exposed to a person with a confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Negative PCR Test for COVID-19 | **Positive PCR Test for COVID-19 or symptomatic**

Acute COVID-19 (up to 4 weeks) - includes infectious period
Follow guidance on isolation and where possible reduce your child's contact with others during this time. **Remember it is reported that the virus 'may be' transmitted for between 3-12 days.**
Seek and obtain medical support if concerned.

Balanced sleep, activity and rest aids recovery.
Ease cautiously back into previous levels of activity, prioritising rest, nutrition and sleep. Communicate with the school. **Ask the doctor to screen for cardiac symptoms before returning to sports.**** Seek medical support as often as required.

Has your child recovered from acute COVID-19?
We consider recovery as being able to complete a normal daily routine without worsening of symptoms (general tiredness for 1-2 weeks after any infection can be normal). Children with pre-existing health conditions may take longer to recover. **Be aware that some children who initially appear recovered can develop new or worsened symptoms at 4 - 6 weeks (or anytime).**
Be aware of the symptoms of PIMS*
Long Covid is the umbrella term that covers ongoing signs and symptoms for more than 4 weeks after infection. (**Ongoing symptomatic COVID-19: 4-12 weeks, Post COVID-19 Syndrome: 12+ weeks.**)

Support the body to fight the virus with plenty of fluids, good nutrition, good sleep and **rest, rest rest.**
Seek professional advice on supplements and medication as appropriate. **Seek medical advice at any time if concerned.** If your child remains unwell they are likely to need ongoing rest to support their recovery.

Yes | **No**
My child has recovered | **My child has ongoing symptoms**

Back to education
Arrange a meeting with your school about a flexible return to school trial. Support your child's mental health by planning social time at school where possible. **Seek support from a SENCO, Occupational Therapist or Educational Psychologist as needed.**

Pacing for recovery
Recovery times vary, this phase can take weeks or many months. Be supportive and honest to help manage your child's expectations. **Seek medical support if your child's symptoms get worse or do not improve.**
Start as small as is needed for success: examples could be:

- Sitting up for 2 minutes**
- Concentrate for 2 minutes**

Recovery does not always follow a straight line. It is not unusual to have ups and downs.
Building in rest days and rest periods between activities is a recognised strategy for recovery. Be prepared to revisit an earlier stage of recovery if needed. **See LCK Pacing Penguins for further guidance.**
Ensure your child can sustain improvements for a period of time before increasing activity. **Seek professional advice as often as required.**

Is your child ready to attend education? Can your child fulfil their pre-Covid morning routine (with or without support) and sit and concentrate on an activity about the length of an average lesson without worsening of symptoms?

Yes | **No**

Does your child need more support with daily activities?
Continue working towards your child fulfilling their pre COVID-19 routines in small stages. **Try and see what happens if you give your child more help during essential living tasks - can they concentrate on activities better after support?** You may have to help your child decide how to use their energy. Providing help with one activity could 'free up' energy for another.

At this point, you might decide to try short periods of learning at home
Work with your school to prioritise recovery alongside learning. An Occupational Therapist can support - discuss this with your doctor. Start with a lesson that your child enjoys and build up gradually. **Thinking requires energy and frequent short rests and breaks can help.**

Is your child ready for the next steps in their recovery?
A good gauge that your child is showing signs of improvement could be if they can:

- Sit up as they usually would to engage in an activity they usually enjoy for around half an hour.
- Concentrate on an activity they used to do without difficulty for around half an hour.
- Regulate their emotions during activities or discussions as they usually would.
- Listen to, respond and engage appropriately in conversation as they would have previously.

Yes | **No**
My child is ready | **My child needs more support**

*www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/our-services/hospital/paediatric-multisystem-inflammatory-syndrome/overview.aspx
** <https://publications.aap.org/aapnews/news/7206>. This poster is for guidance only. Always seek individual medical advice.