



# Parent Connection



HENRY FORD DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRICS

**August 10, 2021**

*We know life may be challenging right now and we want you to know your Henry Ford pediatrician is still here for you. Below we have collected articles and resources we think you might find helpful. Information in our newsletters is yours to use when it is helpful to you and yours to disregard when it is not. We hope you and your family are staying safe during this pandemic.*

## **COVID-19, the Delta Variant and What Your Pediatrician Wants You to Know**

As we prepare for children to return to school, it is very important to protect them from COVID-19. The [Delta variant](#) is more contagious than other strains and is quickly becoming the dominant strain. The good news is the [COVID-19 vaccines](#) we have are effective in preventing or minimizing COVID-19 illness. It is true that children and adolescents have a lower risk of severe illness from COVID than adults. Yet the total number of overall cases in children, as well as the number of hospitalizations and number of severe cases of COVID-19 including deaths has risen with the Delta variant. Leonard Pollack, M.D., FAAP, Division Head of Pediatric Inpatient Services, says, "Henry Ford has seen several children over the past few months who required care in a pediatric intensive care unit and some of those patients will likely experience long-term effects from the disease."

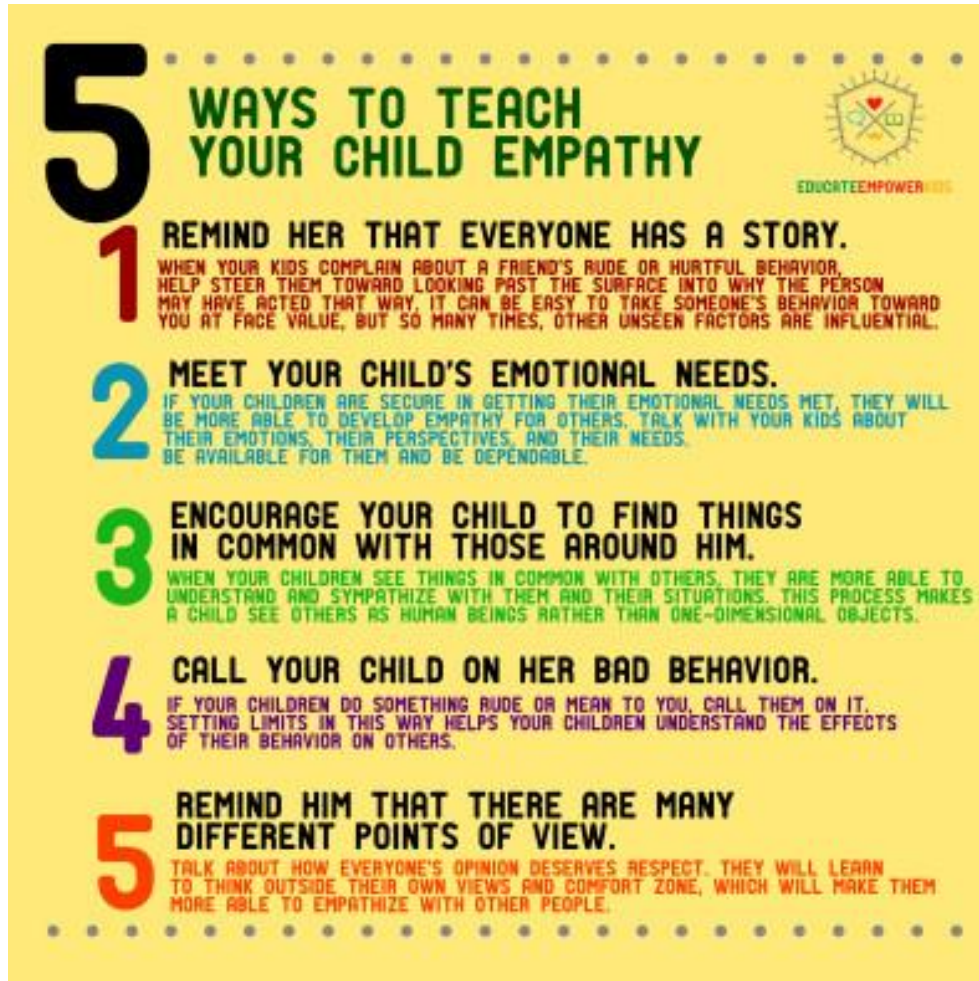
The CDC currently has Southeastern Michigan in the moderate risk category which means that they do not recommend masks for everyone. They are [recommending masks in schools](#) (grades K-12) even for those who are fully vaccinated. They also recommend masks indoors in areas of the country with high rates of COVID infection.

The states with lower immunization rates are now having severe outbreaks. Dr. Pollack emphasizes, "it is important that we immunize as many people as possible to prevent further spread of disease. While there have been some rare reports of side effects from the vaccine, the risk of severe complications of the disease is far greater than the risk from vaccination." COVID vaccination is currently available and recommended for all children ages 12 and over. He continues, "It is especially important for children with underlying heart, lung or neurologic disorders, as well as children who are overweight and children with immune defects." If you have questions about vaccinations, please talk to your child's doctor. Anyone 12 and older can get a vaccine at Henry Ford, click [here](#) for more information.

## **Building Empathy in Children**

Empathy is the ability to understand and share in the feelings of another. What people sometimes don't realize is that empathy is a skill that you can work on strengthening and [model for your children](#). You can even start teaching empathy as early as [infant and toddlerhood](#). Cultivating empathy in your children requires more than just being a good role model. It is more than teaching your children to be kind and generous. This [comprehensive article](#) shares twelve steps to help develop empathy in children. One phrase that is helpful to

practicing and modeling empathy is: “It shouldn’t have to happen to you to matter to you.” Teach your children to try to think about how something that happened to a friend might make them feel. Help them understand ways they can show compassion, support, and strength to others. [These books](#) can help your child learn more about empathy and how to put it into practice.



### Masks at School and Respecting Choices

The CDC and the AAP [recommend people wear masks during in-person school](#) this fall. This is because the [Delta variant is more contagious](#) and children 11 and younger cannot yet be protected with the vaccine. Some schools may require masks and others may let it be a personal decision for the family. This means that in some schools there will be some kids in masks and others without masks. Regardless of your family’s choices, it is important to respect everyone who is operating within the current guidelines. Some parents and experts are concerned [children may be bullied about mask choices](#). Remind your children that families may have many reasons for choosing to wear or not wear masks. Many families have children under 11 who cannot be vaccinated or other members of their families who are immunocompromised and at greater risk. Some families feel safer with a mask and want to help protect the vulnerable in their communities. Remind them how to [respect each other’s choices](#), even if they disagree. Talk to your children about your family’s decision about masks and give them time to ask questions. Help them feel confident about their own

personal decision. Feeling uneasy or unprepared about a personal decision can lead us to be critical of others who hold a different opinion.

### **Back to School Meal Planning**

Back to school often means back to a schedule. Meal planning can be a great way to make juggling a busy schedule a little easier. There is no right or wrong way to meal plan. This one full day [back to school meal plan](#) can help give you an idea of where to start. These recipes can all be made ahead of time for a quick, easy option. Meal planning can be [great for all daily meals](#). These [menu options](#) provide a little something for the whole family. If you aren't sure how to get started, [these tips](#) can help you begin meal planning. If you have a toddler, [these ideas](#) might be a good place to start.

### **Getting Back into a Routine for School**

For many students, this fall is the first time since the pandemic started that they will be heading back into the classroom. This means getting back into a routine to help school days go smoothly is more important than ever. One of the first ways to get started is to develop a [back-to-school sleep routine](#) to avoid cranky mornings. There are many [free checklists](#) online to help make sure nothing is missed before school starts, including doctor visits, school supplies, and important dates. Getting your children back to eating at [regularly scheduled times](#) can also assist in ensuring kids are ready to learn. This year in particular, children may be [experiencing anxiety](#) about going back to school. Be ready to listen to their fears and [help them work through](#) the best ways to address them.

### **Sportsmanship**

Fall sports are fast approaching and sportsmanship is something everyone can practice. Sportsmanship is when people who are playing a sport treat each other with respect. This includes players, parents, coaches, and officials. Sportsmanship can be hard, as everyone likes to win and can easily feel upset when things don't go exactly as planned. There are many [ways to show sportsmanship](#) when participating in a sport. Shaking hands with the other team, supporting teammates by saying "good job" or "good try," accepting a loss without whining or making excuses are all ways to show sportsmanship. Parents can be a role model by demonstrating sportsmanship for their athletes. [Parents can show sportsmanship](#) by not arguing a call, keeping sideline comments positive, and congratulating the winning team. Recently, [a great example of sportsmanship](#) was displayed by the United States gymnast, Simone Biles. After Biles withdrew from competition due to a health issue, she showed constant support for her teammates. She was encouraging, positive, and believed in her teammates. Even though she couldn't compete in several scheduled events, she still wanted her teammates to win and do their best.

*Are there other topics you are interested in and would like to learn more about? If yes, please e-mail us at [ParentConnection@hfhs.org](mailto:ParentConnection@hfhs.org) or to unsubscribe.*