

Kid Reporters Ask the Experts About COVID-19

Volume 1



Scholastic Kids Press is a group of **talented kid reporters**, ages 10–14, from across the country and around the world. Since 2000, the award-winning young journalists have reported “news for kids, by kids,” covering politics, entertainment, the environment, sports, and more in their hometowns and on the national stage. We asked our Scholastic Kid Reporters to send their questions about the coronavirus to experts at Yale.



Siroos Pasdar
age 11, New York

1. How is the coronavirus [SARS-CoV2] related to the flu? How is it different?

—Siroos Pasdar

Both coronavirus and influenza are viruses that can cause fever, cough, a runny nose, and breathing problems. Both can be transmitted from one person to another, although the new virus appears to be more contagious than the flu. They are two different kinds of viruses. While there is a vaccine for influenza, we do not have a vaccine for SARS-CoV2.

*Thomas Murray, MD PhD
Associate Professor, Department of Pediatrics
Infectious Diseases and Global Health
Yale School of Medicine
Associate Medical Director, Infection Prevention
Yale New Haven Children's Hospital*

2. How can we reopen parts of the country without having to worry that people will still be spreading the virus?

—Siroos Pasdar

There are a few things we need to do to ensure that we can open the country safely. The first is to make more testing available for the virus. It's important to test people with flu-like symptoms for SARS-CoV2. We may even need to get tested if we have been near someone who has COVID-19 to make sure that we didn't catch it. If we have the virus, we will need to stay home until we are better, or we get a test that shows the virus is gone. It is also likely that we will need to keep at least six feet away from one another and that we will need to avoid large crowds when areas first reopen. Finally, washing our hands frequently when we have been out in public, covering our mouths when we cough, and wearing a mask, if asked, are all important to stay safe. Hopefully, in the future, there will be a vaccine to keep us from getting sick. But that will likely take time to develop.

Thomas Murray, MD PhD

3. How can people who have lost their jobs recover? How will they pay for necessary things, such as food and shelter?

—Siroos Pasdar

People who have lost their jobs can apply for unemployment benefits. Unemployment benefits are a way for the U.S. government to help continue to pay the salary and wages of people who lose their jobs unexpectedly. Although unemployment benefits do not always cover the total paycheck that an individual may usually receive when employed, unemployment benefits do provide some cash assistance to people who have lost their jobs for a period of time until they can obtain a new job.

As unemployment rises, Americans' ability to afford food and other necessary items will decline. To help, the U.S. government has set aside money to help families with basic necessities and medical care.

*Megan V. Smith, DrPh, MPH
Associate Professor in Psychiatry
Yale Child Study Center
Associate Professor in Social and Behavioral Sciences
Yale School of Public Health*

4. A lot of business have closed amid this pandemic. How can restaurants and small businesses recover from this outbreak?

—Siroos Pasdar

Many local businesses have been forced to close, and others have decided to close. Even if you cannot visit businesses and restaurants in person, there are ways you can still help your local restaurants and businesses to reopen.

Help Main Street was created to help keep local businesses from losing so much money that they would need to close permanently. It allows people to buy gift cards from their favorite stores and use them once businesses reopen. The Help Main Street site currently features a database of 20,000 businesses across the country and allows users to add new ones.

Many local businesses now allow you to shop online. You can also email your favorite business and ask them the best way to help.

Megan V. Smith, DrPh, MPH



Lucia Dong
age 11, Hawaii

5. How likely is it for kids to get COVID-19?

—Lucia Dong

Kids can get COVID-19 just like adults, especially if they spend a lot of time with someone who has the disease. However, for reasons nobody yet understands, most children have a milder form of the disease. Occasionally, a child may need to come into the hospital to get treatment, but more than 90 percent of children are able to fight off the disease on their own.

Thomas Murray, MD PhD



Nolan Pastore
age 14, Ohio

6. Can you contract the coronavirus multiple times?

—Nolan Pastore

No one knows the answer to this yet. The hope is that the antibodies your body makes will offer protection the next time you are exposed. However, we don't know how well they will work—whether you won't get sick at all, won't be as sick as you were the first time, or will get just as sick. We should have an answer to this over the next year, as people who already had the virus are exposed again.

Thomas Murray, MD PhD

7. What advice do you have for kids who are anxious about resuming their normal routines once social distancing is (gradually) lifted?

—Nolan Pastore

First of all, don't wait until routines return to normal. While quarantining, try to do things that are challenging to you. For example, if separating from your parents is hard, spend time separately from them (even in the same house). If social interactions are challenging, keep up your social connections over technology. And stick to a routine as much as possible. Go to sleep at night, and get up in the morning. Eat regular meals. Stay active.

When your normal routine does resume, don't expect it to be easy right away. Allow yourself time to readjust and get used to it again. Don't be discouraged if the first few days or weeks are harder than you expect.

Finally, ask for help when you need it. If you need more support, tell someone so that they can help you or get you the help you need.

Eli R. Lebowitz, PhD
Associate Professor
Director, Program for Anxiety Disorders
Yale Child Study Center



Sophia Wolff
age 13, Delaware

8. When we go back to school, what will be different?

—Sophia Wolff

Returning to school will look different, depending on where you live and what school you go to. Most school districts are currently making plans to open their doors and welcome you in the fall, but they are also planning for how to continue your learning at home, if necessary.

Here are some things that might be different from what you were used to before COVID-19. There will no doubt be extra attention to washing hands. Your classroom might be arranged for more space between seats. There might be limits on big group gatherings, like assemblies.

Look for extra support when you return. Your teachers know that this has been a stressful time and that keeping up with classwork may have been difficult. Schools are planning to help each student get back on track, and to support them emotionally, too.

Even though learning at home has had challenges, some changes have been positive, and schools may want to continue with them. For example, many teachers, families, and students report enjoying the personal connections they've made through video chats. So don't be surprised if you still see your teacher popping up on your screen at home!

Karen Baicker
Executive Director
Yale Child Study Center–Scholastic
Collaborative for Child & Family Resilience

9. When can we have birthday parties again?

—Sophia Wolff

Birthdays as you had them before COVID-19, with large gatherings and in-person celebrations with friends and extended family, are on hold for now. However, not being able to celebrate the way we're used to does not mean we can't celebrate at all. People are getting very creative with birthday celebrations, while respecting the rules of social distancing. Many are doing drive-by parades with costumes and birthday signs, scavenger hunts around the neighborhood, or Netflix parties where everyone can watch the same movie from home. Blowing out your candles or having a fancy dinner with friends and extended family over video chat are other new favorites. Some kids are negotiating with parents to have a celebration once the quarantine is over. I urge you to be patient and continue to do what makes you happy while staying safe. Before you know it, social distancing restrictions will be lifted, and there will be a lot to celebrate.

Claudia Moreno, MD
Assistant Professor in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
Yale Child Study Center



Leo Tobbe
age 14, Kentucky

10. What is being done to find a safer and more efficient treatment or cure for COVID-19?

—Leo Tobbe

Many hospitals are trying different medicines to treat COVID-19. This is done through clinical trials. Doctors may compare two different kinds of medicine against each other to see which works best. If they have a medicine they think works, they may compare two different doses or the number of days the medicine is needed. The trials also monitor the safety of the medicine to make sure the side effects are not harmful. When a medicine is found to work, the doctors and scientists will make the information public so other hospitals can use the same treatment. Many of these trials are happening now for COVID-19 with lots of different medicines.

Thomas Murray, MD PhD

11. What sources can we trust to provide accurate information about COVID-19?

—Leo Tobbe

Two great places to go for accurate information are the World Health Organization at www.who.int and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov. There is a lot of inaccurate information on the internet, so always double-check that the source is reliable.

Thomas Murray, MD PhD



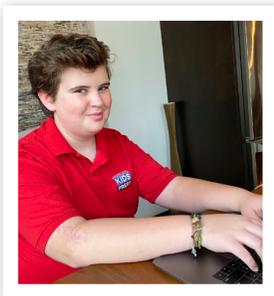
Munveer Singh
age 12, California

12. What steps do scientists need to take to develop an effective vaccine that will be available to the general public?

—Munveer Singh

The first thing scientists must do is to make a vaccine that causes the body's immune system to make the right kind and number of antibodies that will protect us against the virus. They need to figure out the right dose and whether a single dose is sufficient, or if booster doses are required for adequate protection from the virus. Next, they must ensure that the vaccine is safe and does not cause any unexpected harmful effects. Once they think they have a safe, effective vaccine, they will give it to a small group of people and monitor whether they get COVID-19 or not, compared with people who do not get the vaccine. Then they will know if it can be given to the larger population.

Thomas Murray, MD PhD



Jaxon Jones
age 12, California

13. What does COVID-19 stand for?

—Jaxon Jones

COVID-19 is short for “coronavirus disease 2019.” The virus that causes COVID-19 is called SARS-CoV2. SARS stands for Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome. Some people with COVID-19 can have a dry cough or sore throat and, when the infection is bad, trouble breathing.

Thomas Murray, MD PhD

14. Were there similar viruses in the past that we can learn from when looking for a treatment for COVID-19?

—Jaxon Jones

There are two main viruses related to this one that scientists are studying to help find a treatment. The first is the original SARS-CoV, which made people sick in 2003. The second is MERS-CoV, or Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus, which also gave some people breathing problems in 2012. Scientists are currently learning how these viruses compare to help prevent COVID-19 infection and find a treatment.

Thomas Murray, MD PhD

15. Do we know the origin of the novel coronavirus?

—Jaxon Jones

SARS-CoV2 has been found in bats in China. No one knows for sure how the virus went from a bat to a human. But if someone breathes in the virus or touches a surface with the virus on it, and then touches his or her mouth, eyes, or nose, he or she could become sick from it.

Thomas Murray, MD, PhD