Classroom teaching from 11 May 2020

The Department of Education welcomes the Federal Council's decision, that from 11 May onwards, face-to-face teaching at schools for children of compulsory school age will be possible again under certain conditions.

Link: Hygiene and conduct rules in several languages

Classroom teaching may not take place beyond the subjects mandatory as per lesson plan or beyond the special needs education measures and therapies associated with it. Further classes provided by the elementary school (elective classes and courses of secondary school, voluntary school sports, etc.) or classes provided by third parties at the school (courses in native language and culture, voluntary religious education, etc.) are not taking place, respectively continue to be taught by distance learning.

At the media conference on April 30, 2020, the Department of Education commented on the Federal Council's decision and presented a way to allow for classroom teaching and at the same time protect the health of teachers, children and young people in the best possible way.

Information for parents

For immediate initial information on resumption of classroom teaching at general education and special needs schools, there is a letter to the parents in various languages by the Office of Elementary Education; please click HERE

Corona and School

Symptoms, persons at risk

What are the symptoms that could indicate corona disease?

Most common symptoms:

- Cough (mostly dry)
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath
- Fever, feverish feeling
- Muscle ache
- Sudden loss of taste or smell

Rare symptoms:

- Headache
- Gastrointestinal symptoms
• Conjunctivitis
• Coryza (common cold)

In case of illness and in case of doubt, a medical specialist should be consulted.

Who belongs to the group of so-called persons at risk?
Persons older than 65 years and people with the following pre-existing conditions are particularly at risk:

• High blood pressure
• Chronic respiratory diseases
• Diabetes
• Diseases and therapies that weaken the immune system
• Cardiovascular diseases
• Cancer
  The clarification in Annex 6 to the Covid-19 Ordinance 2 should be noted.

The corona virus represents no additional risk for children with low immunity, asplenia, leukemia, rheumatic diseases, heart conditions, etc. This is why children are not more susceptible to COVID-19 and do not become more seriously ill than children without pre-existing conditions. The same holds true for well-adjusted diabetics and asthmatics. In addition, these children are well-attended as to medication and preventive measures and are very well versed in protection and hygiene.

The FOPH makes the following statement: “According to current data and experience, there are no COVID-19 high-risk groups when it comes to children, which would require additional protective measures (as opposed to adults).”

Hygiene precautions
What are the regulations or recommendations for hygiene and health & safety in schools?
Pursuant to the FOPH standards (§ 4.4), the following rules apply inter alia:

• General hygiene rules for all people who move around in school buildings are recommended (hand, object and surface hygiene, no handshakes)
• Children do not share food or beverages
• Hygiene stations (washbasins with liquid soap dispensers* and disposable towels) are provided at sensitive places such as schoolhouse/schoolroom entrance, staff room, library etc.
• Surfaces and equipment need to be cleaned several times a day if possible
• All rooms need to be cleaned regularly and aired thoroughly (at the latest after each lesson)
• Adults who are not directly involved in school operations (including parents) should avoid the school campus

* According to experts, the use of disinfectants is not necessary. Children wash their hands with soap; conventional liquid soap and detergents are perfectly sufficient.
Where necessary, hand disinfectants are used in the staff room or in rooms where objects are handled and hands cannot be washed immediately afterwards.

**Are there special rules or recommendations for the operation of day centers and school meals?**

Yes, the school guidelines apply. In addition, the FOPH stipulates:

- Special hygiene precautions should be observed during the meal service for students
- No self-service as to food and silverware
- If possible, staggered meal service to ease congestion
- Protective equipment for the food to be served and the service personnel (e.g. Plexiglas panels).

**Should or must teachers and students protect themselves with masks?**

There are neither federal nor cantonal regulations in this respect. Excerpt from the FOPH guidelines: "In this setting, preventive wearing of masks is not a sensible measure. However, masks should be provided at the schoolhouse for certain situations (someone starts showing symptoms at the schoolhouse, use on the way home or potential waiting time at the schoolhouse)".
For above-mentioned exceptional circumstances, the schools purchase the masks on the free market.
The parents continue to be responsible for the way to school and back.

**Is there anything special to consider regarding gymnastics or swimming lessons?**

Beyond the hygiene precaution for schools, there are no particular rules. It is obvious that staying in the water and swimming does not pose a particular problem, as viruses cannot be transmitted via water.

**Cases in schools**

**What has to be done when children or teenagers become ill at school?**

The parents must be informed immediately and pick up their child. The child should stay in a protected room until the parents arrive. Care givers must keep a distance of 2 meters from the child and from the parents picking up the child. Surfaces in care facilities or the school must be cleaned with a normal detergent and fabrics must be washed.

**Who needs to be informed when a child has contracted the corona virus?**

1. The school management informs all parents of the affected group/class that a child has contracted COVID-19. Neither the teacher nor the children of the same group/class need to self-quarantine since in a school setting, this kind of contact is not considered to be “close”*. However, they should watch their state of health. On the other hand, the child which is ill with COVID-19 must self-isolate and the family members (parents and siblings)
must self-quarantine as they are "close contacts". The same applies to an ill teacher.

2. If cases of COVID-19 accumulate in a group/class however, one must proceed in compliance with the definition "close contacts" and the teacher, respectively the children of the same group/class must be quarantined.

3. Both the adult school staff and the school children may only attend school if they do not show any symptoms of illness; self-isolation and self-quarantine measures apply to everyone in the school.

*The FOPH makes the following statement on this: "The children's companionship within the school setting is not defined as a close contact. Should cases accumulate within the school setting, one must proceed in compliance with the definition "close contact" and quarantine must be implemented. Particularly with regard to such situations, the schools should have concepts on how to separate defined groups from each other within the school so as to prevent further cases.

Who must be informed if a person living in the household of a teacher, child or teenager has contracted the corona virus?

If a person living in the household of a teacher, child or teenager has contracted COVID-19, the teacher, child or teenager must self-quarantine. Only the school management has to be informed that the said teacher, child or teenager must be in self-quarantine for 10 days and is therefore absent from school. Other persons such as teachers, care team or parents of children/teenagers of the same group/class do not have to be informed because they were at no time at risk of infection.

In the event of a corona case in the family, the teacher or the student stays in quarantine with the whole family for 10 days. If that person does not develop any symptoms during this time, he or she may go back to school or childcare after 10 days.

Leaflets on self-isolation and self-quarantine.

Help centers for parents and teenagers

Childcare at home
In case you urgently need childcare, e.g. because you have an unexpected emergency or become ill, you can contact the Swiss Red Cross.
Swiss Red Cross

Emergency Call for Parents
The counselors are there for you 24/7 for emergencies and family crises.

147, for children and teenagers
The counselors are available 24/7 and support children and teenagers in any kind of situation.
147.ch

Intervention agency against domestic violence
Domestic violence is no private affair - not even in times of corona. Intervention agency against domestic violence.