

Holiday Gifts for school-age kids 2020



Holidays 2020 style: Oops. I must have been wearing my mask when I told your grandmother that you wanted a “new fur cat.” I think she heard “new fur hat.”

We’re bringing back our popular holiday gift guide based on ages and developmental stages. As always, we will concentrate on non electronic options, as well as pandemic-friendly ideas.

Kindergarten:

What’s happening: Kids at this age can hop up and down on one foot and they start having a better sense of time. They tell simple stories, can tell real from make-believe and can swing and climb.

Ideas: Clocks, calendars, and games that require some balance like Twister® are all hits. Games with simple rules such as checkers and puzzles with large pieces are developmentally within reach. They may enjoy reading books with very simple sentences on their own. Foster creativity with colored papers, crayons, markers, stickers, and water-color paints.

Younger elementary school (the little kids):

What's happening: This group is now more self sufficient. For instance eight year olds can perform self help skills such as tooth brushing entirely on their own. They start to understand quantities and therefore concepts such as money. They display more concern for others and understand team work.

Ideas: make every-day-living activities fun. For instance, give a basket of interesting scented shampoos, or an assortment of toothpastes with a toothbrush that plays a tune. Give wallets or piggy banks (hold on the Venmo account!). Basic sports equipment of any sort will be a hit. Label makers will also appeal to this age group since they have a greater sense of ownership. This age transitions from learning -to -read to reading-to-learn. In other words, they start to cull information from reading. Give age-appropriate non-fiction books about an area of interest to them.

Older elementary school (the big kids):

What's happening: Fine motor skills are quite developed and intricate arts and crafts such as weaving kits can be manipulated. They are more aware of their bodies as puberty approaches. As peer relationships become more complex, they also experience more peer pressure.

Ideas: If you are a long distance relative, research online some of the things you enjoyed doing as a kid and send out

ahead of time some materials such as a set of balloon animals or a deck of cards. Then give the gift of a lesson over Zoom on how to make crazy balloon critters or magic card tricks. No time to send anything out? Give the gift of how to make cat's cradle variants with random string or how to fold paper airplanes. Your nephew probably outgrew the bike from a couple years ago, so consider replacing it with a larger one. Age-appropriate books about historic figures can give kids ideas for role models. The big kids are also fans of joke and riddle books.

Middle school/Junior high (the tweens):

What's happening: With increased attention spans (30-40 minutes) they can work on activities for a longer period of time. They pay more attention to body image, looks, and clothes. Complex thought emerges and they can better express feelings verbally.

These kids can cook, really cook.

Ideas: These kids can cook, really cook. Just look at Chopped Junior. Get them the culinary tools you covet. Also, any building project, whether it's for a model of baby Yoda, or a back yard rocket, will be appreciated. Harmonicas, ukuleles, and keyboards can be self-taught online, are not very expensive, and can give tweens an artistic and emotional outlet. Tweens also value their privacy – consider a present of a journal with a lock or a doorbell for her room.

High School (the teens):

Whats happening: As teens gain more independence and responsibility, often they take on a job outside of the home. They continue to develop their capacity for caring, sharing and for deeper more intimate relationships.

Ideas: If you look at factors which build a teen into a resilient adult, you will see that adult involvement in a

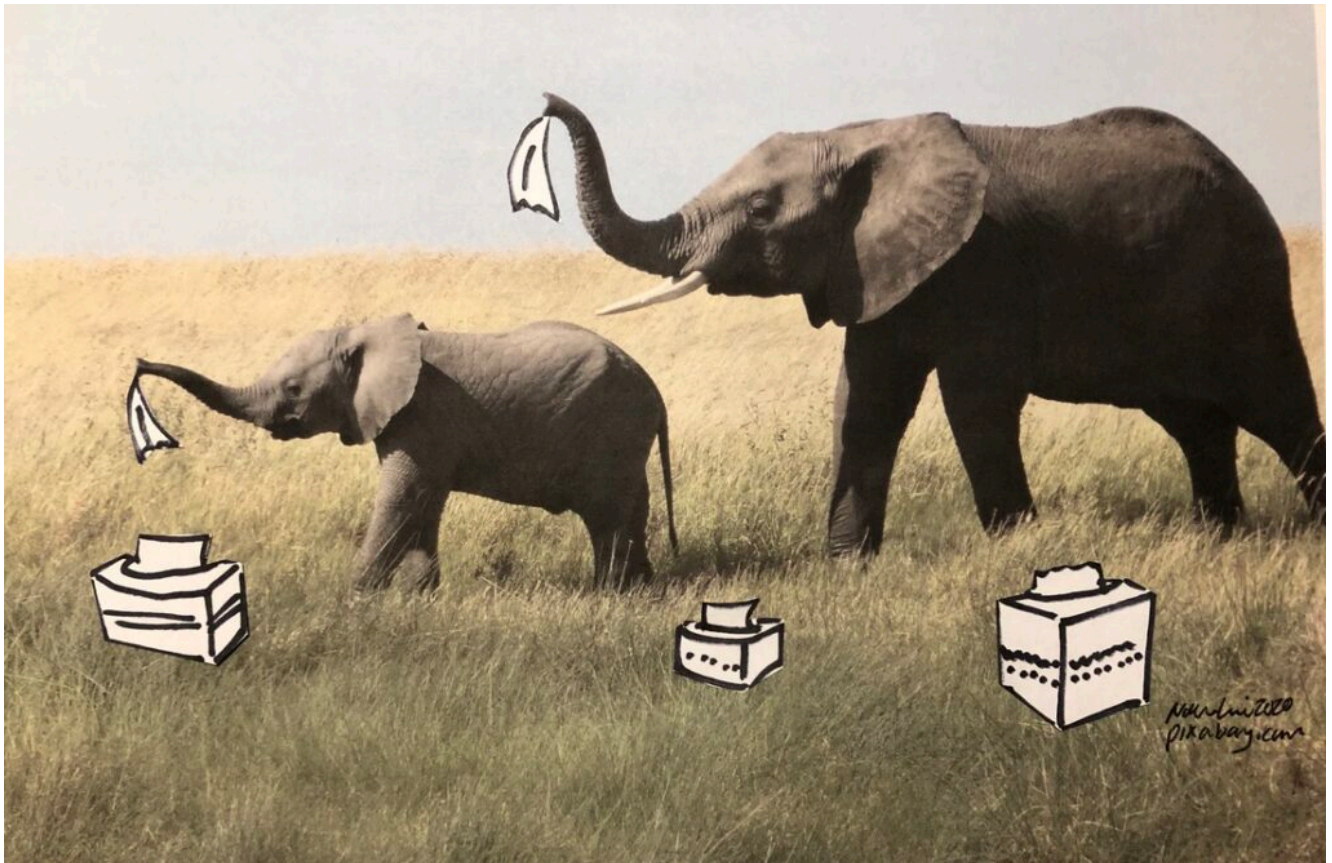
child's life is important. We know parents who jokingly say they renamed their teens "Door 1" and "Door 2," since they spend more time talking to their kids' bedroom doors than their kids. Create opportunities for one-on-one interaction by giving gifts such as a day of socially distanced shopping with their aunt, or two hours kayaking with their dad. Adolescence is the age of abstract thinking and self awareness– Google "room decorating led lights" or "wall decals" and find a plethora of inexpensive ways to jazz up their room or another room in the house.

Enjoy the holiday season!

Naline Lai, MD and Julie Kardos, MD

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Is it COVID or a cold?



Viral lamentations: imagine an elephant's woes when a cold ends up in their nose

In the age of the COVID-19 pandemic, we can no longer say easily that your child with cold symptoms has a simple cold. Pre-pandemic, it was so easy to say, "Of course they can go to school with a cold. Most kids can participate and be perfectly happy despite their stuffy nose or mild cough." We pediatricians often spent time reassuring parents about colds.

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 (COVID) infections, is one of many viruses that mainly attack the airways. Most of the viruses cause similar initial symptoms, making it difficult to distinguish one from another. COVID, just like other illnesses, can appear like an innocent-seeming cough, runny nose and a mild fever. Determining if your child has COVID or a cold is trickier than knowing how to tell the difference between a cold and the flu.

"COVID in children can look just like a simple cold."

Because it is so difficult to tell the difference between COVID or a “regular” cold, your pediatrician may ask you to assume that your child has SARS-CoV-2 and advise them to undergo testing and/or to keep them home. Since they might have COVID, you don’t want your child to pass it along to someone else. A child with COVID could pass it to a child with underlying health conditions. Or their teacher. Or another kid who is otherwise healthy, but then passes it to their own parent who has diabetes. Or to their grandparent who lives with them.

A negative COVID test in your sick child is reassuring. Then you know that their cold may be from another virus, such as rhinovirus or RSV. In this case, after taking into account all factors, your pediatrician might say that your child may go back to school or daycare if their symptoms are improving. However, even if your pediatrician gives the green light, whenever practical, try to keep your children home until that last booger has dried and any cough is gone. If some other child gets a cold, their family will be in the same quandary as yours over the need to test for COVID or isolate/quarantine. (See CDC guidelines [here](#)) Besides, even “common colds” can lead to complications, and no one needs more complications in 2020.

The good news

- Masking, distancing, and keeping your child home when sick should limit the spread of even simple colds. These practices can decrease the number of times your family members will need to stay home and quarantine.
- Vaccine studies to prevent covid are happening right now.
- Research into medicine to mitigate the effects of COVID illness is happening right now.

While we cannot rush the science, at least the scientific research that will advance our understanding of COVID is well

underway.

In the meantime, please continue to laugh and have fun with your children. We have always said “Don’t get sick,” NOT “Don’t have fun.” Hopefully our new temporary disease-preventing habits of wearing masks and distancing will prevent ALL illness this year, whether COVID or not.

Julie Kardos, MD and Naline Lai, MD

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How superheroes wear masks



Superheroes don't wear masks just over their eyes when they fight germs.

Every child, long before COVID, was taught to prevent germs from entering their bodies by washing their hands and making sure their nose did not get too close to other kids' noses. As we've always said, "You don't want someone's boogers to jump into your nose." Besides distancing, wearing a mask is just another way to prevent those boogers from jumping in or out of noses. But most people are unfamiliar with wearing masks and are not sure how to teach their kids to wear them.

Enter superheroes. As we know, superheroes wear masks. Above is a photo of one of Dr. Lai's favorite superheroes, along side other mask-wearing superheroes. Her superhero sister is an ER doctor. She wears layers to keep herself from bringing home COVID to her own kids. She works in this garb for hours and hours. We borrow from her hints for helping your kids do

the same with their masks:

- **Cover both your child's nose and mouth with the mask.** The path for a germ to enter and exit the lungs is through BOTH the mouth and nose...it's all connected. If the mask has a wire at the top part of the mask, pinch it over your child's nose and press gently over the tops of their cheeks. This helps prevent glasses from fogging and also limits germs from coming and going through leaky areas of the mask.
- **Have your child talk, sing, and jump up and down in their mask before leaving the house.** We have seen many a mask wiggle down a kid's (or parent's) face as they start to talk. It's like watching a game of chutes and ladder...the mask goes up a little, and down a little, and sometimes it slides right off.
- **If the mask seems too big, try tying the loop with a small knot.** The secret is to fold the mask in half (lengthwise) with the outsides facing each other and tie a knot close to where the strings meet the paper/fabric. Then pop it back open and tuck the corners in. This works best with a paper mask. Note, masks are not recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics for those under two years old. Check out other kids who should not wear masks here.
- **Some kids will complain about the mask.** It can be a comfort issue, a fashion issue, or a habit issue. They are just not accustomed to wearing a mask and over time they will get used to it. If comfort were the only goal of kid fashion, gel light-up princess shoes would not exist! Practice having all of your family members wear a mask around the house before venturing out. Also, try your child's mask on yourself. Maybe the material really is "stinky" or "pinchy" and it's time for a different mask.
- **Once a mask is on, teach kids to pull up a mask from the sides or near their cheeks, not near their nose.** Again,

you want them to avoid touching their boogers.

- **Taking off a mask correctly is as important as putting one on.** When taking off a mask have them wash their hands with soap and water and then gently take their mask off at the ears. If their hands are not washed and they touch their mask around their nose, there is the potential for germy droplets on their hands to jump into their nose.
- **If you find that ear loops are chafing your child behind the ears or over the cheeks,** moisturize an hour before wearing. If you moisturize right before putting on the mask, there is the risk that the mask will slide around. There are all sorts of methods to hook the loops to places other than behind the ears. You can sew buttons on a headband and secure the loops to the buttons or secure the loops to glasses. There are also mask extenders available. Use non-comedogenic (non-acne-producing) lotions such as Cervave®, Cetaphil®, or moisturizers meant for faces only.
- **If cloth, wash the mask in soap and water when they get home.** There is no need to torch the mask with high heat or douse in a special chemical. A good wash with soap and air drying for a day will kill off germs- COVID and other germs as well.
- **Paper masks need to breathe.** Most are technically one time use, but let's get real, we know that you will use them more than once. Store them in paper lunch bags-fold the masks so the outside (germy side) is touching together.
- **One final tip: COMPLIMENT your child's proper mask wearing!** Dr. Kardos is often overheard exclaiming to her patients: "I LOVE your mask! It is so COOL! Do you like MINE? See how I wear it LIKE A SUPERHERO?" It is fun to watch the kids immediately put on their masks if they were initially off, and to pull it up over their noses correctly to mirror Dr. Kardos if they had been wearing the mask improperly.

What better barrier against nose spew than wearing a mask? Have your kids wear them in superhero style. Until this pandemic is under control, mask wearing will play a huge role in keeping your children safer from disease spread.

Naline Lai, MD and Julie Kardos, MD

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Tick removal and prevention



The classic bullseye rash of Lyme

Kids are running about and so are the ticks. We're talking

about tick removal and prevention of tick bites in the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Tip of the Week!

Julie Kardos, MD and Naline Lai, MD

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Conversations: Talking with kids about race



Does the adult looking through the camera at these children see what a child sees? – photo courtesy of Pixabay

No matter your skin coloration, you will have the first opportunity to teach your kids about racism in the United

States. To help you approach the topic, therapist Dina Ricciardi culled through the internet to pick out resources to start a dialogue. – Drs. Lai and Kardos

Lately, conversations and news coverage about racism surround us. Images of unrest and violence have covered our news screens, affecting our country, our communities, and sometimes our own homes. On top of the global pandemic of COVID-19, navigating the topic of race and race relations with your family can feel downright overwhelming. Adults may be experiencing a whole range of feelings. Emotions may range from anger to sadness to fear and beyond. While us parents want to teach our kids, we also want to protect them. We wonder, do we talk with them about what they see on television and social media? Or do we shield them from serious problems?

Our understanding and beliefs about race, whether our own race or others', is deeply personal and rooted in our own unique experiences. As parents, we may feel unprepared and not know how to address our children's questions and concerns. Therefore, we may avoid conversations about race.

Fortunately, there are many available resources. Many educators, mental health experts, and medical professionals are sharing information to equip us with knowledge and confidence. Below is a handful of the offerings.

Resources on talking with kids about race:

The Child Mind Institute

https://childmind.org/article/racism-and-violence-how-to-help-kids-handle-the-news/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=%20Parents%20Guide%20to%20Problem%20Behavior&utm_campaign=Weekly-06-02-20

The American Psychological Association

<https://www.apa.org/res/parent-resources/index>

Embrace Race www.embracerace.org

Book Recommendations:

Books about a variety of races

<https://www.todaysparent.com/family/books/kids-books-that-talk-about-racism/#gallery/books-that-talk-about-racism/slide-1>

Books with Characters of Color

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/lists/books-with-characters-of-color>

Books for Asian-American Children and Young Adults

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/13-best-asian-american-children-s-young-adult-books-2019-n1078226>

Book Recommendations for Adults:

The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library

<https://www.nypl.org/blog/2020/06/09/schomburg-center-black-liberation-reading-list>

Well Read Black Girl

www.wellreadblackgirl.com

Links to issues of racism, police violence and discrimination (says COVID, but not about COVID):

<https://www.pa-fsa.org/Admin/Dealing-With-Covid-19-Copy>

These are just a few of the resources available to help you wade into challenging conversations about race. As stated by Dr. Howard Stevenson from the Penn Graduate School of Education, "The more you listen for what your child already knows, what they are concerned about, what they are afraid of, the more you'll be able to help them speak and feel confident...and keep listening, because your child will need you to keep that conversation going."

Dina Ricciardi, LCSW, ACSW

Ricciardi is a licensed clinical social worker and psychotherapist in private practice treating children, adolescents, and adults in Doylestown, PA. She can be reached at dina@nourishcounseling.com.

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What to do if you are exposed to someone with covid-19

<https://www.facebook.com/PediatricPhysiciansPC/videos/716299772521174/>

Confused about what to do if you are exposed to someone with covid-19? What if you are exposed to someone who was exposed to covid-19 illness? Do you self-isolate? How long?

We welcome back our pediatrician friend Dr Roy Benaroch as he explains, briefly and clearly in his two minute video, just what to do. We promise you will gain knowledge and confidence.

Julie Kardos, MD and Naline Lai, MD

*Roy Benaroch, MD, of Pediatric Physicians, PC , has been practicing pediatrics in Atlanta, Georgia since 1997. He is an adjunct professor of Pediatrics at Emory University, writes an excellent blog *The Pediatric Insider*, and has authored several helpful pediatric related books, articles, and videos. This video is shared with his permission on Two Peds in a Pod®*

How to sit at the computer: Ergonomics for kids doing schoolwork at home



#homeschooling #computer ergonomics #COVID
#admireteachers

Oh my aching back...

Right now, with schools closed, kids of all ages are doing schoolwork at home. Technology has allowed continuation of

learning and even face-to-face check in with teachers. But it also poses some challenges. School classrooms are designed for children; our kitchen tables are not. How to sit at the computer? Just as we require ergonomic workstations for our jobs; we need to consider proper fit and alignment for our children as they learn virtually. The following are basic ergonomics for kids doing schoolwork from home that can prevent muscle aches and fatigue.

Where to place the computer screen:

Place the computer screen directly in front of your child with the eyes level with a spot about 2-3" below the top of the screen. In addition, place the keyboard so that the upper arms and shoulders are relaxed. The forearms should be parallel to the floor and the elbow bent less than 90 degrees. The chair should have back support and allow the thighs to be supported parallel with the floor. Knees should also be bent to 90 degrees or a bit less with feet supported. This can be a challenge for our elementary school kids who are trying to work at home. The Canadian Safety Council suggests: "choose a chair that places the child at the proper height in relation to the equipment. If that means a higher chair, provide a footrest to support the feet and a pillow to support the back."

How can you adjust the chair?

Chairs with adjustable seat and footrest heights are great for this. If you don't have an adjustable chair, you may need to create a footrest out of a box, block or storage crate. Also, since many children are using laptops, it is difficult to position both the screen and keyboard appropriately; it may be best to attach a separate monitor at the right height once the keyboard is set for proper arm and body position.

Avoid back and neck pain:

If children are using an iPad or reading a textbook, an angled

book holder may help with proper positioning to avoid back and neck pain. We have cookbook holders for a reason!

If your child is doing lots of writing or drawing:

An angled writing surface will help with fatigue and proper support. There are quite a few child sized desks available with a surface that raises to an angle. If your child is a wiggler; consider a ball chair with an appropriate height table that allows for that 90-90-90 ankle, knee, hip alignment, or consider using a standing desk. In each case, the keyboard, mouse and screen still need to be adjusted for alignment as above.

The most important thing you can do is make sure your kids take a break and MOVE every 30 minutes according to both the Cornell University Ergonomics Web and Canada Safety Council. Active breaks are necessary not just for the body, but for the eyes as well. The best ergonomics for kids doing schoolwork at home cannot substitute for these breaks.

Here are some ideas for quick movement breaks to keep the aches and pains away:

1. Stand and stretch arms up overhead. Grasp hands interlocking fingers, flip palms up to the ceiling and stretch.
2. Bring arms behind your back at hip height, grasp hands or hand to wrist and try to pull shoulder blades down and together.
3. Stand with hands against a wall, place one leg back with knee straight and foot flat on the floor. Keeping your body straight like a board, lean into the wall and stretch the back of the calf.
4. If you have a yoga ball, lie back over the ball with feet flat on the floor, raise your arms out to the sides like a "T" and take some deep breaths.
5. Go outside in the yard and play!

6. No yard? Raining? Have a dance party or play “Simon Says.”

Stay home. Stay safe... and keep moving.

Deborah Stack, PT DPT PCS

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We thank Dr. Stack for contributing to twopedsinapod.org– Drs. Lai and Kardos

Dr. Stack is a board certified specialist in pediatric physical therapy and the owner of the Pediatric Therapy Center of Bucks County, LLC in Doylestown, PA. In addition to treating children ages 0-21 for conditions such as torticollis, coordination, neurologic and orthopedic disorders, she also instructs physical therapists across the country in pediatric development and postural control and is a Certified Theratogs fitter.

**Vaccinate your children
during the COVID-19 pandemic**



Photo by Lexi Logan

Social distancing? Take the time to immunize

Parents are calling us and asking to cancel their well baby visits to the pediatrician. Tempted to cancel? Think again. **If families allow their babies to get behind on their vaccines, we will risk other epidemics.** It is important to vaccinate your children during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Before vaccines, babies died of polio, bacterial meningitis, pneumonia, blood infections, measles, and whooping cough. All of these infections are contagious. Babies need to stay on track to get immunized against these potentially lethal illnesses.

Vaccine preventable illnesses such as polio are still alive in the memories of those now experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic. Pictured to the right is a photo of members of Dr. Lai's family. Great-Uncle Holloway, with the broken arm, and his

cousin Billy were slated to go swimming soon after the photo was taken. Cousin Billy went, was exposed to polio at the pool, and died shortly after. In a twist of luck, Great-Uncle Holloway was spared because he had broken his arm and thus did not go to the crowded swimming pool that day.



Billy (L) and Holloway (R) in the 1930's

We understand your fear of leaving home with your baby. We know that some families have difficulty obtaining transportation. But we know also that vaccine preventable illnesses are MUCH more dangerous than COVID-19 for our youngest children.

One day socially distancing will end, and on that day, babies will be more vulnerable to vaccine preventable illness. We cannot possibly catch up every single baby on our first day out of isolation. It is far better to keep your babies up to date on vaccines all along.

In the US, our American Academy of Pediatrics strongly urges pediatricians to continue to vaccinate our infants and younger children on time.

Pediatricians across the country, and the world, are adjusting how they see patients in their offices in order to protect their patients, as well as themselves, from acquiring COVID-19 in their offices. Ask what steps your baby's doctor is taking to provide extra protection for your family.

Vaccines not only protect your own children, but they also protect everyone around them. Remember that some babies with immune system disease or other underlying medical reasons cannot receive some vaccines. Immunizing your child can protect these children as well as themselves.

We cannot stress more how important it is to vaccinate your children during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please share this post with anyone you know that has young children, especially babies, who are due for vaccines.

Julie Kardos, MD and Naline Lai, MD

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The lesson of coronavirus



For my college graduate whose graduation ceremonies will most likely not happen, and my other kid who is now online and vacating her school, I think it will be the best lesson of their lives ...how privilege can be taken away in an instant. A privilege to learn, to travel, to breathe...many people have never been on an airplane or ever lived in a dorm room. As a pediatrician, I am surrounded by worried families. Tell your kids that we're all in this together, this is the time to use their youth and creativity to spark good-although they may not have our wisdom, they are not locked in an adult mindset of how things "should be." There is much to be done-an economy to revive, cures to be found. Somehow they have been blessed with an illness that is kinder to the young. The time they have ahead of them may look different than what they expected, but it is the same...full of hope and promise that they will use their energy and creativity for the greater good.

Naline Lai, MD

How to tell the difference between spring allergies and coronavirus disease (or any other respiratory virus)



Every spring I find bunched up tissues wedged everywhere- in the cup-holders of the car, in couch crevices, and in the bottom of back packs. Yes, beautiful flowering spring is here in the United States along with lots of pollen to tickle everyone's noses. But this year, along with the pollen, the

coronavirus disease, aka COVID-19, has swept in.

So how can you tell when your children's noses become congested and they start coughing, if your child has spring allergies or coronavirus disease? While there is an overlap in symptoms between allergies and viruses, there are a few distinguishing features:

Allergies Itch

Itchy nose, itchy eyes, itchy throat. If your child is doing a lot of facial rubbing or throat clearing, you can fairly accurately blame allergies. If needed, treat these annoying itches with allergy medicine such as cetirizine (brand name Zyrtec), loratadine (brand name claritin), or fexofenadine (Brand name Allegra). You can also read our prior post about spring allergies. Allergy medicine does not improve these symptoms if your child has a virus.

Fever: Viruses can cause fever. Allergies do not.

If your child has a fever along with their runny or stuffy nose, coughing, sore throat, and watery eyes, think VIRUS. Also, think "contagious." In contrast, allergies do not trigger fevers. So if your child has sudden onset of respiratory symptoms WITH FEVER, you can't blame it on allergies.

Age

If your child is younger than a year, it is unlikely that they will show signs of spring allergies because they have never been exposed to spring pollen. A person needs to be sensitized to something before they can be allergic to it. If it is only your child's first spring, they will not show signs of allergies. Usually, cold symptoms in a child this young means that your child does, in fact, have a cold virus.

While we do have medications to treat allergies, respiratory viruses, including the one caused by covid-19, have to run

their course.

The following are helpful websites to keep up with emerging information about the novel coronavirus disease, or COVID-19:

Centers for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov)

Your state's Health Department (You can click here for the PA Health Department)

World Health Organization (<https://www.who.int/>)

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