

Guide to New Social Distancing Rules:

Information for Parents and Guardians



As Malta begins to relax its social distancing requirements, making way for the re-opening of its economy, the need for guidelines to assist parents has arisen to ease the confusion and mixed feelings in society. This guide aims to help parents when faced with decisions on the activities they wish their children to engage in, following the new social distancing requirements.



Mental Health and Wellbeing should be a primary determining factor when taking decisions

If as a parent you feel that your child will benefit mentally from going out and enjoying fresh air in the company of others, it is fine to do so but remember to maintain a safe distance even when in a group.

If you are not ready to take that step, it is fine too; but respect other parents' decision to do so and do not judge. Remember that Covid-19 has affected everyone differently and we should respect one another.



Returning to Normality

For many their perception of "normality" has now been altered and might need more time than others to readjust to life after being indoors for a long time. Be sensitive and kind after the pandemic subsides.



Clinginess and Separation Anxiety

Children cling to their parents to help themselves feel safe and comforted, in order to cope with all of the changes and the uncertainty in their world right now. To help, try to dig into the specific source, or sources of their unease. This might also be the case with older children. Be patient and encourage them to feel safe, while respecting the time they need to adapt. Creating daily routines goes way deeper than keeping children on track academically; it also gives them an underlying sense of security that is very important right now.

Try your best to model calmness and confidence. Remember you are all they have right now.



Weigh the Pros and Cons

Because the risk of transmission is higher indoors, you should still avoid being inside others' homes for social purposes unnecessarily. It is safer to meet outdoors.

Some activities are riskier than others, so it is important for you to weigh the pros and cons before exposing your child to unnecessary risk. Opt for low-risk activities such as meeting in large outdoor spaces, walking, swimming and non-contact play while maintaining social distancing. Children under 3 are not obliged to wear masks.



Sports and outdoor activities

Children should be encouraged to be active and keep up their hobbies and sports. This has a positive impact on their mental health and overall wellbeing, particularly after weeks of complete abstinence of outdoor time.

Remember to ask for all relevant safety information from your child's club enabling you to make an informed decision and explain to your child the importance of maintaining safe social distances and good hygiene.



Older children and adolescents

While older children were able to maintain regular online contact with friends during the pandemic, it is understandable that they are now eager to meet up physically with their friends. Remember to explain to them the importance of respecting social distancing requirements at all times and stick to large outdoor spaces.



These guidelines and recommendations have been developed by the **Office of the Commissioner for Children** in collaboration with the **Public Health Regulation Department**.



For further information and support contact the Office of the Commissioner for Children on **2590 3708** or by email: **cfc@gov.mt**; or find us on Facebook. You may also visit **covid19health.gov.mt** for more information.

Do not forget to follow and keep yourselves up-to-date with the latest recommendations by the **Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate**. Follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @HPDPMalta