

COVID-19 – safe return to schools

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) UPDATE NO. 26
15 May 2020



Current global situation

- Nearly 4.25 million confirmed cases globally
- 300 000 deaths

Top ten countries with the highest number of new cases (last 24 hours)

- USA – 18 044
- Russian Federation – 9 974
- Brazil – 9 258
- India - 3 722
- UK – 3 242
- Peru - 3 237
- Chile - 2 660
- Mexico - 1 997
- Iran (Islamic Republic of) - 1 958
- Saudi Arabia - 1 905

For the latest data, please access:

[WHO situation dashboard](#)

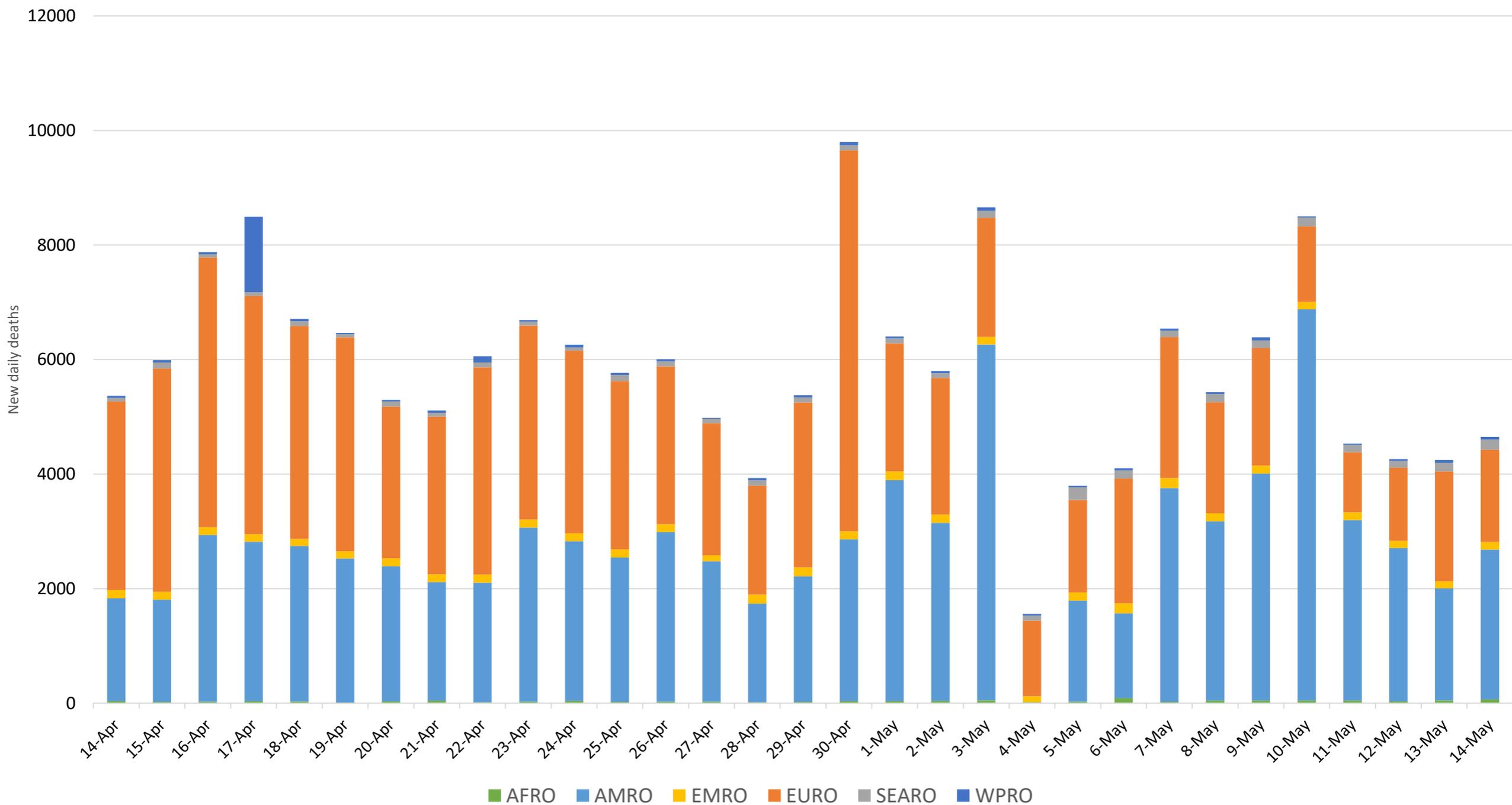
[WHO situation reports](#)

[UNWFP world travel restrictions](#)

Data as of 04.05.2020



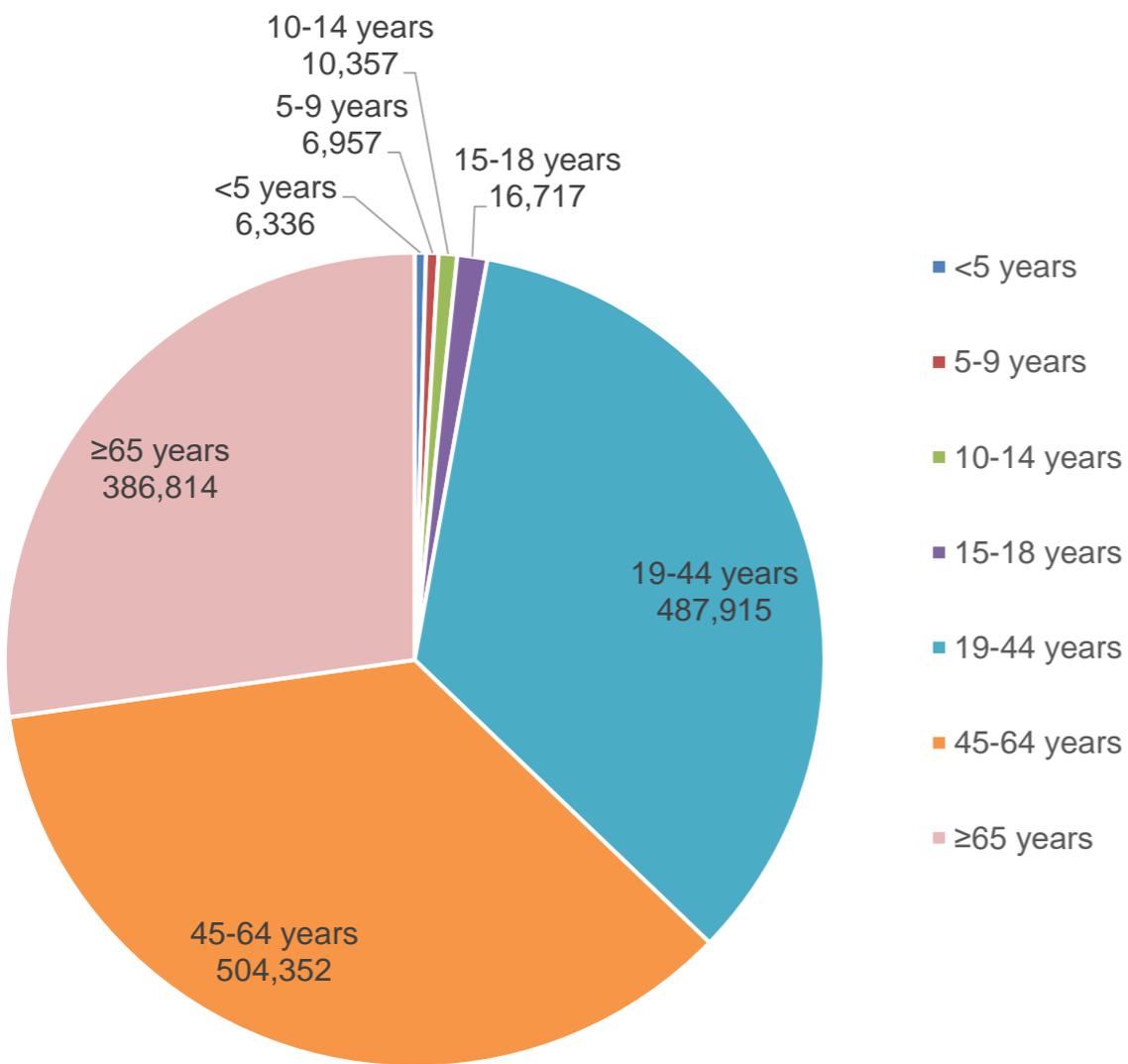
Number of new deaths of COVID-19 per day, by WHO region





COVID-19 and children

Distribution by Age of COVID-19 Cases



Distribution of COVID-19 Cases in Pediatric Population

Age Group	Number of cases	Percentage of cases
Under 5 years	6336	0.45
5-9 years	6957	0.49
10-14 years	10357	0.73
15-18 years	16717	1.18



Transmission in school settings

- School closures are based on evidence and assumptions from influenza outbreaks
 - reduction in social contacts between students, interrupt the transmission
- Role of children in transmission of COVID-19 is unclear
- Very few studies involving educational institutions
 - Data shows little transmission in school setting
 - Related to social events linked to school or university life rather than transmission within classrooms

Jackson C, Vynnycky E, Mangtani P. The relationship between school holidays and transmission of influenza in England and Wales. *Am J Epidemiol* 2016; 184: 644–51.

Danis et al Cluster of coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) in the French Alps, 2020. *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, ciaa424, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciaa424>

COVID-19 in Scholls – the NSW experience. http://ncirs.org.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/NCIRS%20NSW%20Schools%20COVID_Summary_FINAL%20public_26%20April%202020.pdf

Zhang et al. *Science* 2020. Changes in contact patterns shape the dynamics of the COVID-19 outbreak in China. <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/early/2020/05/04/science.abb8001/tab-pdf>



Benefits of re-opening school, when it is safe to do so

- Educational attainments
 - Long school closures can result in a reversal in educational gains
 - the longer children stay out of school the higher the risk of non-return
- Socio-economic
 - Children in school allows parents to work
- Safety and security
 - Many children rely on school for their nutrition, health support (for example vaccination) and safety (child welfare support)



Photo: WHO/Lorenzo Pezzoli



The local situation and epidemiology of COVID-19

Decisions regarding why, when and how to reopen schools must take into account the following:

- Movement and transport situation: current movement restrictions and the ability of children to travel to and from school safely
- The trend in COVID-19 cases in the area (increasing or decreasing)
- The public health capacity to quickly detect and respond to new cases
- The level of collaboration and coordination between the school and local public health authorities
- Staff and children at risk for severe disease (elderly staff, underlying conditions)



School setting and ability to maintain COVID-19 prevention and control measures

1. Policy, practice and infrastructure

There must be adequate school resources and infrastructure to maintain COVID-19 prevention and control strategies including:

- policies and resources for hand and respiratory hygiene
- space for physical distancing in classrooms and elsewhere
- availability of a nurse to care for sick children

Policies for educators and school staff to address the following:

- safety of school staff (especially higher risk)
- training for school staff on safe operations
- flexible or partial tele-schooling
- enough teachers to support changes



Children learn how to wash their hands properly with soap and water during an activity supported by UNICEF in a school located on the outskirts of Caracas.



School setting and ability to maintain COVID-19 prevention and control measures

2. Behavioral aspects – understanding age-related needs and capacities to adapt to changes

Reconfiguring school resources

- Playtime/outdoor activities that adhere to distancing measures
- Willingness of parents, teachers and students to adapt

Age-based considerations

- Adequate supervision for younger students
- Provision of face-to-face instruction prioritized for those groups that need it most (based on local context/ culture)
- Safety of online/virtual learning platforms



New York Post



UNICEF/UNI319329/Veska



School setting and ability to maintain COVID-19 prevention and control measures

3. Safety and Security – understanding safety and security implications of school closure and re-opening

- Food security in homes
- Availability and capacity of school staff
- Availability of child protection services
- Plans to support the most vulnerable children



The Times



Recommended measures for schools in the context of COVID-19 – Hygiene and daily practices at school

Hygiene and environmental cleaning to limit exposure

- frequent hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, non-contact greetings
- school policy on wearing a mask or a face covering in line with national or local guidance
- regular cleaning of the school environment daily, including toilets and frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, desks, toys

Screening and management of sick students, teachers and other school staff

- “stay at home if unwell” policy
- waive requirement for doctor’s note to excuse absences
- Implement procedures and capacities to isolate ill students and staff

Ensure regular, transparent communication with parents and students

Follow up on additional school-related measures such as immunization checks and plans for catch up vaccination for vaccine-preventable diseases.



Recommended measures for schools in the context of COVID-19 – Physical distancing and tele-schooling

Physical distancing at school

- maintain at least 1m between everyone at school through desk spacing, limit mixing of classes, modify timetables, include more teachers, no crowding, move classes outdoors, ventilate rooms

Tele-schooling and distance learning

- initiate or continue tele-schooling using blended methods, radio or television broadcasts of lessons, buddy system for homework, age-appropriate and frequent follow-up and support, avoid penalizing students in difficult learning environments



Africa is a Country

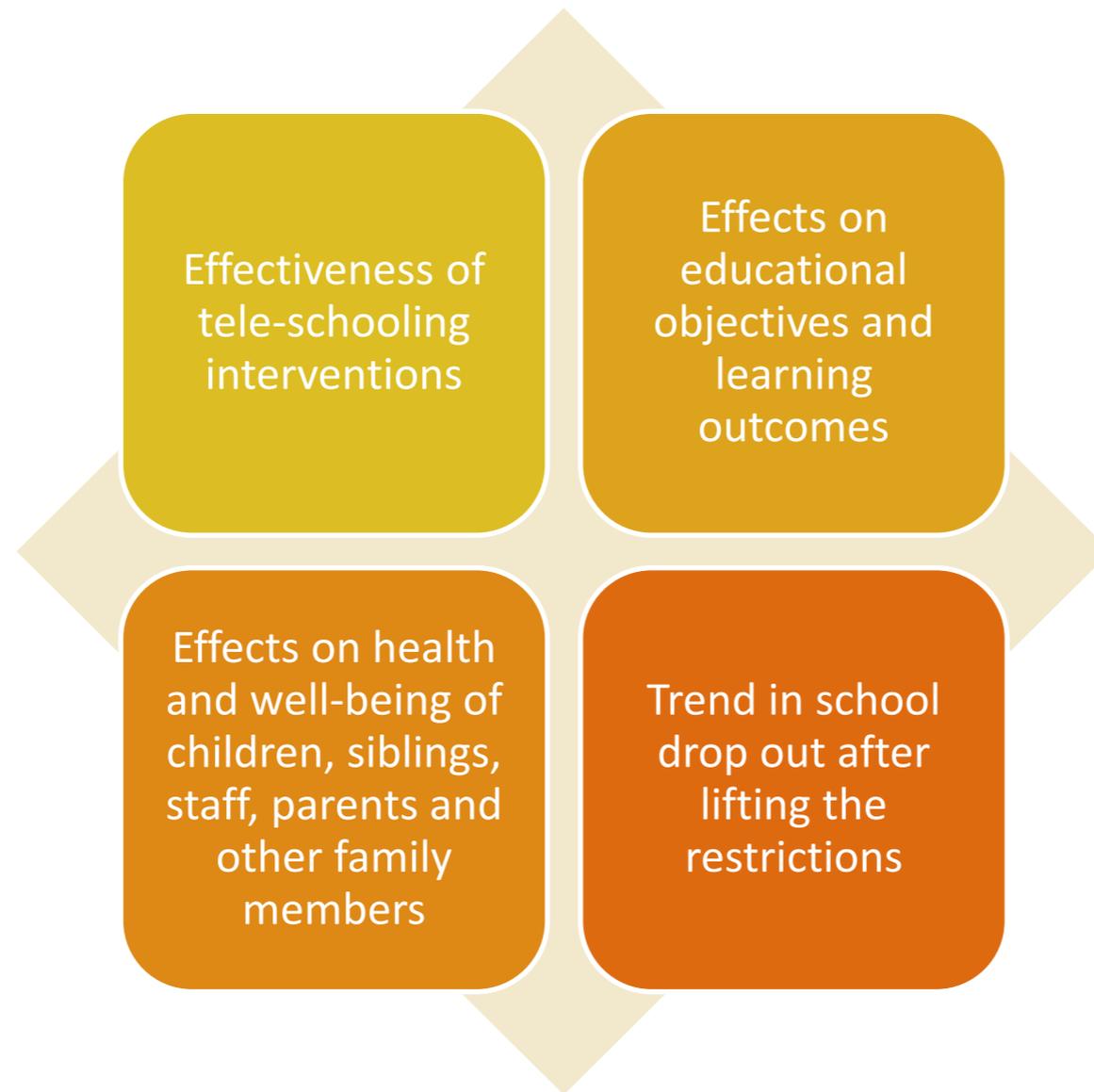


News-press.com



Monitoring of schools after re-opening

It is important to monitor the effectiveness of measures implemented





Guidance and resources

Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19:

<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/considerations-for-school-related-public-health-measures-in-the-context-of-covid-19>

Framework for Reopening Schools - UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank and the World Food Programme <https://www.unicef.org/documents/framework-reopening-schools>

Coronaquest game to play with kids – developed in Switzerland and presented on the EPI-WIN webinar 13.05.20 <https://coronaquest.game/>



Information resources



WHO WhatsApp messaging service

Receive the latest news and information on COVID-19. To subscribe: text 'hi' to +41 79 893 1892



EPI-WIN website

Access to timely, accurate, and easy-to-understand advice and information from trusted sources

www.who.int/epi-win



Previous webinars

Re-opening Schools – UNICEF and WHO

Recording:

https://who.zoom.us/rec/share/uNxsNJrLyXxOTY3EuRruZrUfIK7geaa81XcY8_YPzxwhLUFaR3DPGsaow09SWFbN