

Kelly Stays Home Jr

The Science of Coronavirus



By Lauren Block MD MPH and Adam E. Block PhD
Illustrated by Alex Brissenden



To our budding scientists

About this book

Kelly learns she will be staying home from school given the COVID-19 pandemic. Her mom, a doctor, explains the science behind the illness, viral transmission, social distancing, and basic epidemiology to Kelly and her little brother Joey. Authors Lauren Block MD MPH, a physician, and Adam Block PhD, a public health professor, help parents explain scientific principles behind coronavirus to their kids.

Kelly Stays Home Jr: The Science of Coronavirus

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Kelly is excited it's Friday. She puts on her red shirt for school spirit day and dashes out the door where she expects the school bus to be waiting. No bus!



"Kelly," says her mom, "I just got a phone call. We're going to have spirit day at home, because there's no school today."



"There's a reason you're not going to school and daddy isn't going to work at the office today. There is a new illness called coronavirus. It is spreading to people all over the world. It is easy to catch from other people."

"Everyone is staying home because it is not safe to go to school or to the office. Mommy is going to the hospital tonight like normal to help take care of sick people, but you and Joey will stay safe at home with Daddy."



Mommy hugs Kelly. "This is happening all over the world, not just in our town, and not just in the United States. Families all over the world are staying home so we don't get sick."



Kelly asks, "Since there's no school, can we go to the playground with Eva?"

"Kelly, I am afraid we can't see our friends for the same reason that school and work are closed."

“Also, the playgrounds are closed to make sure kids don’t spread it to each other. The good part is that we’ll have much more time to spend together as a family.”

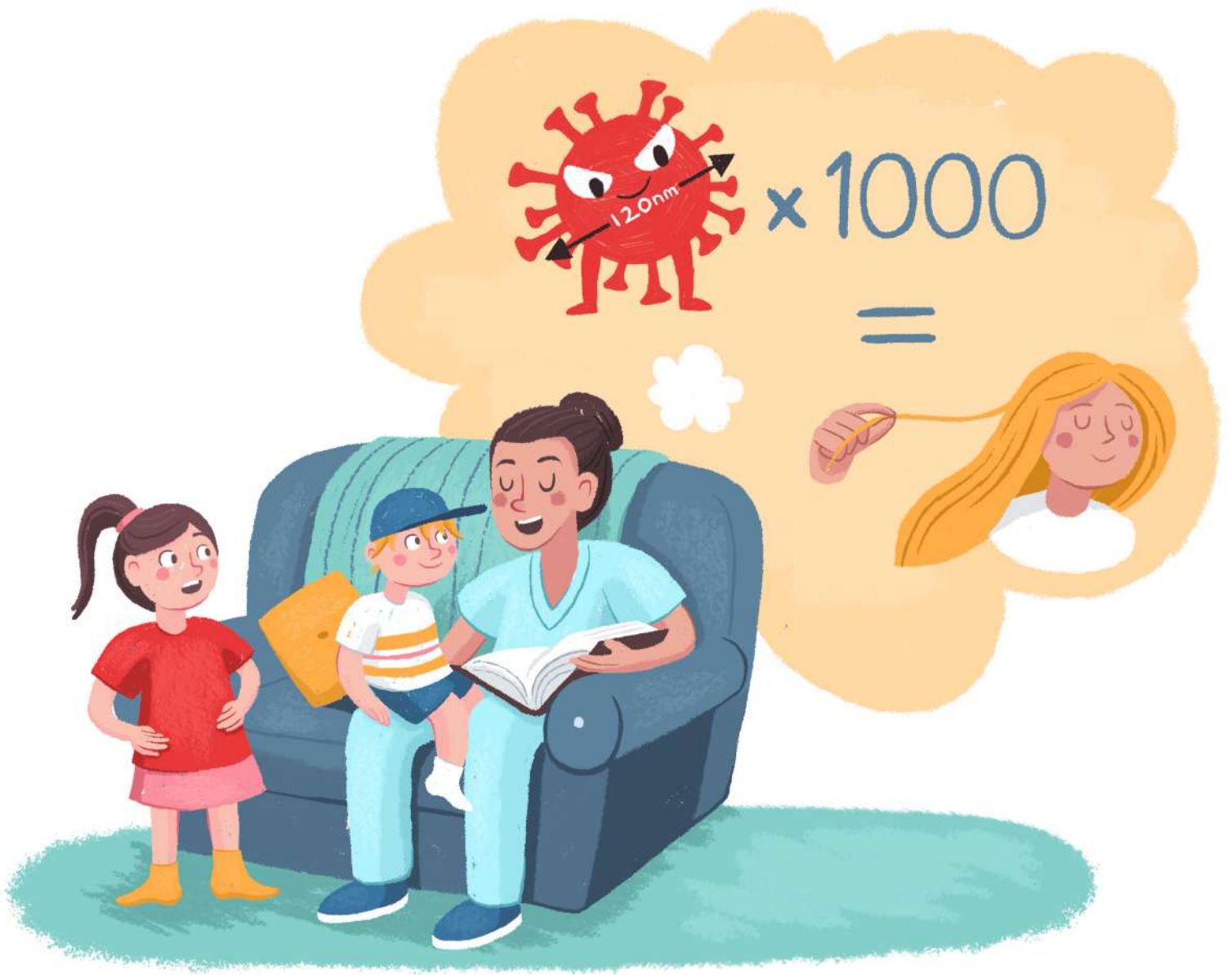




"Can we go visit Grandma and Grandpa? They're in our family."
"We can call them. Grandma and Grandpa are older so if they get coronavirus they can get much sicker."



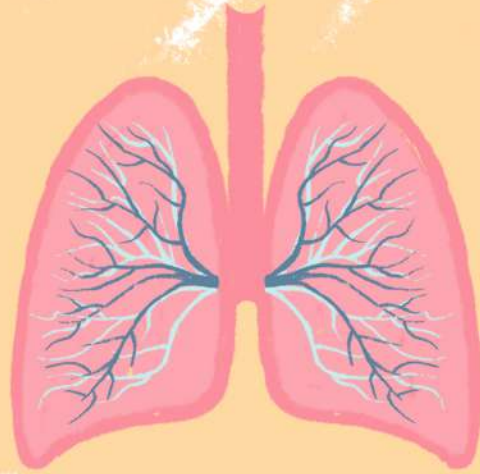
"We can't do anything fun?" Joey says, stamping his foot.
"Sure, there are lots of fun things to do at home. After schoolwork, we will hike outside, cook new things, play games, and go for bike rides. We need to be thankful for what we have, like our family, our home, and healthy food."
"And I'm grateful for dogs!" adds Joey.
"Right, and dogs," agrees Mommy.



“What is a virus?” asks Kelly as Joey climbs on his mother’s lap. “A virus is a very tiny germ. It is so small that if you piled the virus on top of each other it would take about a thousand to be the same thickness as a piece of paper or a hair.”

"Where did coronavirus come from?" asks Kelly.
"That's a great question," says Mommy. "Nobody knows for sure. Scientists think this new kind of coronavirus may have come from a bat."

"The people in China and other countries followed rules to stay at home, wash hands, cover their sneezes, and avoid being too close to other people. And the virus stopped spreading. This gives us lots of hope."



“How can something so small hurt us?” asks Kelly.
“Once the virus gets into your body through your throat or your lungs, it can make them stop doing their normal job of helping you breathe.”

"Am I going to get coronavirus?" asks Kelly.
"The virus travels from person to person. If someone has it and touches your skin, they can give it to you."





"So I won't eat it!" says Kelly, covering her mouth.
Joey covers his ears.
"Joey, those are your ears, silly!" says her mom.



“How can just washing our hands help so much?” asks Kelly. “Washing your hands is one thing we can all do to make sure will not get the virus. The virus is killed by plain old soap. Washing properly means washing your hands for 30 seconds with soap, rinsing, and drying after. If we sing ‘Happy birthday’ twice, we’ll make sure we’re washing for 30 seconds like we should. Here, let’s practice.”

Kelly grabs a bowl and starts pouring her cereal. She sneezes, "Achoo!" and the sneeze flies towards the box.

"The best way to keep it from spreading it to keep our germs to ourselves," says Mommy. "So, remember to sneeze into your elbow. That way, your hands and your food stay clean."

"Sometimes I don't even know I'm going to cough or sneeze, it just comes out of the sky," says Joey.
"We can only do our best," replies Mommy. "So we wash our hands with soap and things that people touch a lot like phones, iPads, and computers."
"We're going to need a lot of soap," agrees Kelly.



Summer



Fall



Winter

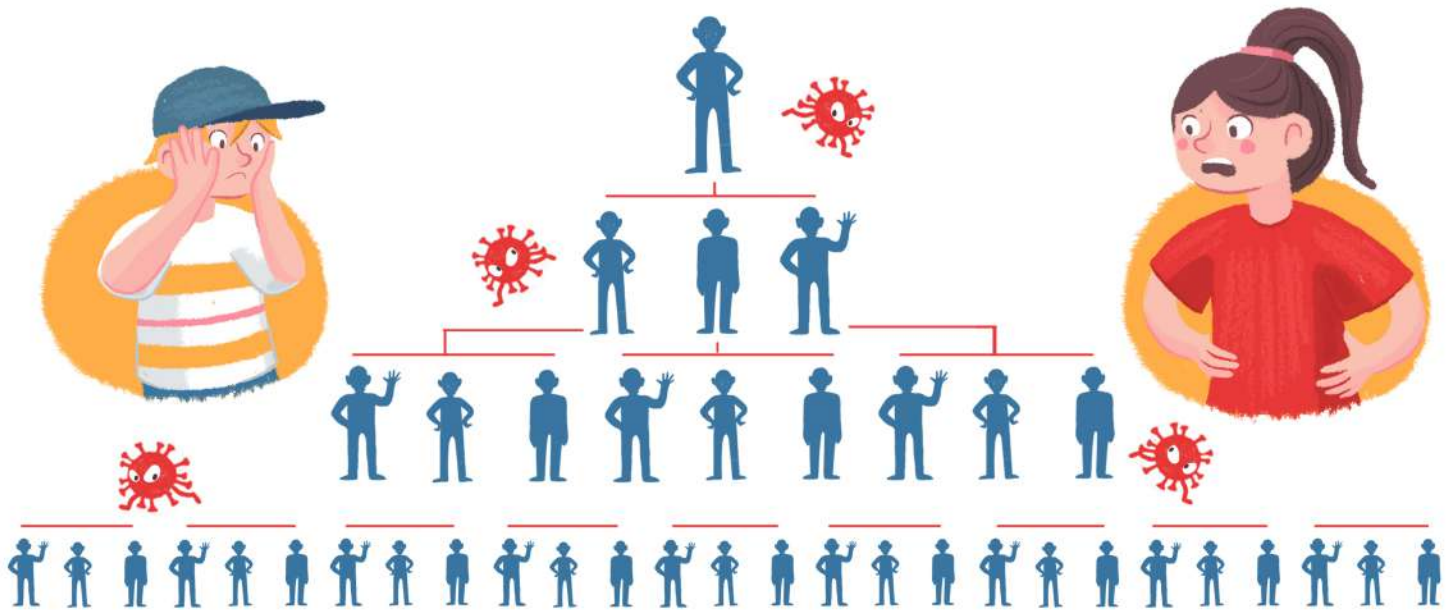
"But how long do we need to stay home?" asks Kelly.
"We don't know yet," says Kelly's mom. "It will probably be a few months. The government will let us know when it's safe to go back to school and for Daddy to go back to his office."



"Doctors are testing new medicines,
and scientists are working on a shot,
to stop people from getting this illness to
begin with."

"No shots!" yells Joey.





“But viruses are tricky. People can get it and feel totally fine for days before they get sick. So people can spread it to family and friends before knowing they are sick. This is how it spread so quickly.”



"If you are going to be around all the sick people, will you get sick, Mommy?" asks Kelly.

"Mommy works in the hospital, so we have lots of armor to help us stay safe. Just like you, I wash my hands a lot. At the hospital I wear special scrubs, a gown, a mask, goggles, and gloves."

"Who else helps take care of sick people at the hospital?" asks Kelly.

"As a doctor, I work with nurses, pharmacists, social workers, and lots of other caring people at the hospital."

"But what happens if I do get it?"

"Well, children your age almost never get very sick, thankfully. But if you or Joey come down with fever, cough and tiredness, you'll tell me or your dad and we'll call your doctor. Almost all kids get better within a few weeks."





"How do you know if you have coronavirus?" asks Kelly.

Mommy explains, "there's a test that goes up your nose to see if people have the virus, but only for people who are feeling sick."

"Up your nose?" asks Kelly.

"Yes," laughs Mommy. "It's not very comfortable, but it's quick."



"Can medicine help?" asks Joey, pointing to the medicine cabinet.

"Many viruses like colds, the flu, and others have no real cure. Some other viruses are treated with medicines. We can cure lots of diseases, and one day we hope scientists will figure out how to cure this one."

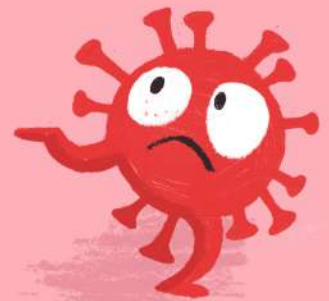


"At the same time, scientists across the world are working on a shot to stop people from getting this virus. Scientists have basically ended many diseases this way. I had chicken pox when I was little, but you'll never get it because your doctor gave you a shot."



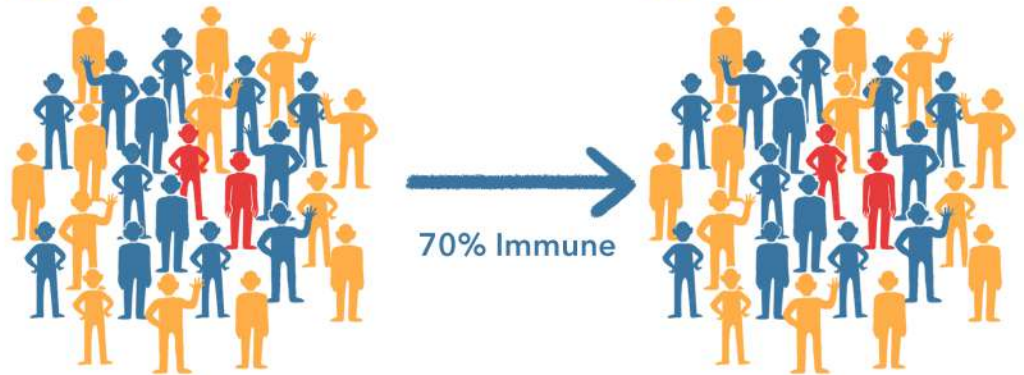
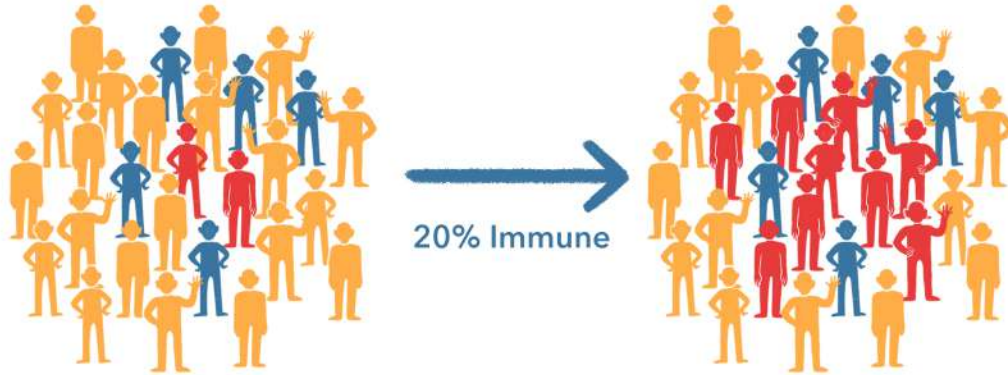
"Is it like a cold where you can get it again next year?" asks Kelly.

"Since the virus is brand new, we are still learning about it. Your body is very smart. Your body learns about the virus and knows how to stop it when it comes back. In fact, that is exactly how a shot works."



"I don't like shots!" says Joey.
"I know, Joey," says Mommy. "But shots are super important. The doctor gives you pieces of the virus that teach your cells the secrets of how to fight it. Think about it like practicing baseball with a whiffle ball, so when the big game comes, you hit a home run with a real baseball."





“What’s more, if everyone around you also has the shot, then there is nobody around to spread it! Then even kids who can’t get shots still get some help from everyone else. This helps keep everyone safe.”

"Is there anything we can do to help?" asks Kelly.
"There's actually a lot we can do here at home. We can bring food to Grandma and Grandpa so they don't have to go out. We can donate to the food pantry to help people who may not have enough healthy food to eat."



"Well, for now we have lots to do here," thinks Kelly. After reading, there was bike riding, games, and lunch. "We'll have a great day today," says Kelly's mom. "We'll play soccer with Joey and do some science experiments later."

"And I can become a scientist one day?" asks Kelly.

"Right," says her mom, "You can become a scientist and help keep people safe and healthy."



Discover along with eight-year-old Kelly the science behind the illness, viral transmission, basic epidemiology, and social distancing needed to protect your kids and community.

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