

Keeping Healthy

Talking to Your Child about COVID-19

Fear and worry are normal for children of all ages. Things we can do to manage stress and support our children during these unusual times include:

- remaining calm
- providing appropriate factual information
- helping them feel some level of control

When talking to our children, a **solutions-focused** approach is most helpful:

- many things are being done to help the current situation (work by governments, doctors, nurses, schools, etc.)
- it will get better
- life will return to normal
- let's focus on caring for our family and friends

Here are some resource suggestions to support you:

- [Frequently asked Questions on COVID-19 for Children and Students](#), BC Centre for Disease Control and Ministry of Health.
- [Managing Anxiety and Stress in Families with Children and Youth During the COVID-19 Outbreak](#), Shared Care Committee, Doctors of BC and Ministry of Health, information and advice on stress and coping with links to resources.
- [Talking to Children about COVID-19](#), Kelty Mental Health, suggestions for parents for talking to their children about COVID-19, tips for self-care and managing children's behaviour with links to resources.
- [Talking to Children About COVID-19 and Its Impact](#), Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, advice and information for parents and other caring adults on helping children cope with stress and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [Supporting Kids During the Coronavirus Crisis](#), Child Mind Institute, tips for nurturing and protecting children at home.
- [Helping Children Cope with Stress During the 2019-nCoV Outbreak](#), World Health Organization, factsheet with tips for parents/caregivers.
- [How to Talk to Kids and Teens about the Coronavirus](#), Psychology Today, age-specific advice and information.

- [SEL Resources During Covid-19](#), CASEL, dedicated COVID-19 webpage providing guidelines and resources for parents/caregivers and educators.
- [Foundry COVID-19 \(Novel Coronavirus\) Information](#), Foundry has a dedicated COVID-19 webpage with information on accessing Foundry services, links to resources and support, and articles on COVID-19, physical distancing, stress, and anxiety.

What We Can Do

Help stop the spread of the virus by practicing correct behaviours:

- thoroughly washing hands
- physical distancing
- practicing good etiquette when coughing or sneezing
- staying healthy through daily exercise, good nutrition and sleep

Pictures are often helpful when explaining concepts and are good reminders to us all. You may consider printing one or more of the following to post in your household:

- [COVID-19 Hand wash and hand rub poster](#)
- [COVID-19 Prevention poster](#)
- The Canadian Government has a factsheet, [be prepared for COVID-19](#) available in multiple languages.
- The Ministry of Health has [hand washing information available in multiple languages](#).

Younger children may enjoy these [hand washing songs and videos](#) or this one from [Sesame Street](#).

Taking Care of Your Child's Mental Health

Here are some ways to support your child:

- maintain normal, predictable **routines** as much as possible
- have **calm**, age-appropriate, fact-based discussions
- focus on the **positive**
- model **compassion**, positive coping and self-care skills
- eat **healthy meals** together
- make sure children are getting **enough sleep**
- spend more time together, increase **play time** – both inside and out

- for older children, encourage **breaks from the news** and social media (if you do watch the news, watch it together to provide an opportunity for conversation and help to keep things in perspective)

Keep Active

Taking frequent, active [breaks](#) away from devices is an important part of staying healthy.

- put on some music and dance
- work through an online video (search “kids workout videos”)
- run up and down stairs
- jump rope
- stretch

Being outside is important for children. [Outdoor Play Canada](#) has guidelines on what’s appropriate during the current pandemic. Keeping appropriate physical distancing, family members could:

- go for a walk
- play in the backyard
- go for a bike ride

Keep Safe Online

With children spending more time at home on devices, it’s good to remind them about staying safe online and being aware of possible COVID-19 scams.

- [Raising Digitally Responsible Youth](#) is a parent’s guide and videos about online safety issues.
- [Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre](#) has details on COVID-19 scams to be aware of.
- The [US Federal Communications Commission](#) has consumer warnings and safety tips.

Children’s Reactions

It’s important to monitor and check in with children and watch for changes in their emotions, mood and behaviour. Changes can signal a need for additional support and/or resources. You may observe your child appearing anxious, preoccupied, or tired, and/or there may be an increase in:

- anxiety

- worrying about self or loved ones
- difficulty focusing
- preoccupation with illness
- need for reassurance
- fatigue
- stomach aches, headaches, etc.

Reactions will vary according to:

- a child's development stage
- level of awareness about the pandemic
- exposure to accurate information about the pandemic
- physical or emotional proximity to the outbreak
- health status of child and/or loved ones
- mental health status of child and/or loved ones
- prior experience with traumatic circumstances

Immediate Help

- **Kids Help Phone:**
 - 1-800-668-6868 (support in French or English)
 - reach a counsellor 24/7
 - text CONNECT to 686868 (24/7)
 - [live chat](#) via the website (9:00pm – 4:00am)

Taking Care of Your Mental Health

Take care of yourself, not just for your well-being, but also for those you care about and support. This will help improve your energy, focus, ability to cope with challenges and overall life experience. And you're modelling wellness strategies for your children.

- take time to **eat** and drink water
- **stay active** to increase energy, boost immunity, reduce insomnia and feel positive
- get enough **sleep** (7-9 hrs per night)
- **stay connected**, supportive relationships are a powerful influence on our sense of wellness.
- **take time** for yourself during the day
- be **mindful** of your thoughts and feelings, both positive and negative – focus on what is meaningful
- treat yourself with **compassion** and gentleness

Ask for Help

Please be aware this is a stressful time and to reach out if you need some help. The Ministry of Health has [information to help deal with the stress of the current situation](#).

Immediate Help

- **Mental Health Crisis Line:**
 - toll-free 1-800-784-2433 or (604) 872-3311 (Greater Vancouver)
 - 24/7 confidential, non-judgmental free emotional support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including thoughts of suicide - available in 140 languages
 - Online Crisis and Youth Chat available at [Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Centre](#)

Indigenous Supports, Immediate Help

- **Kuu-us Crisis Response Services:**
 - toll-free 1-800-588-8717
 - provides 24/7 culturally-aware crisis support to Indigenous people in BC
- **Hope for Wellness Help Line:**
 - toll-free 1-855-242-3310
 - offers 24/7 counselling and crisis intervention by phone or online chat
 - available in French, English, Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut
- **Metis Crisis Line:**
 - 1-833-638-4722
 - provides 24/7 mental health support
 - includes crisis intervention and access to crisis programs

Mental Health Resources

- **Child and Youth Mental Health - Community Based Services:** information on Child and Youth Mental Health teams located across the province, and services provided. CYMH teams are operational, either on site (with physical distancing) or virtual. Intake clinics are also operational, so new referrals are being processed.
- **Anxiety Canada:** expert tools and resources to help manage anxiety (adults and children).
- **Bounce Back:** free evidence-based program designed to help youth and adults experiencing symptoms of mild to moderate depression, low mood or stress, with or without anxiety. Teaches effective skills to help people improve their mental health.

- [Heretohelp](#): provides information about managing mental illness and maintaining good mental health, including self-management resources and screening self-tests for wellness, mood, anxiety and risky drinking.
- [Mental Health Digital Hub](#): a provincial website that provides information, services, education and awareness about mental health and substance use for adults, youth and children.
- [MindHealthBC](#): online mental health counselling program providing information and support for depression, anxiety, or other mental health or substance use challenges; includes recommendations for further support in Vancouver, Richmond and other coastal communities.
- [WE Well-being Digital Tool-kit](#): downloadable well-being resources, social media graphics, and links to inform and support parents and families.

Mental Health Resources in Other Languages:

- [Here to Help Mental Health Resources](#): includes a variety of factsheets (depending on language) in Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Farsi (Persian)/ Dari, French, Korean, Punjabi, Japanese and Vietnamese.
- [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Information in Other Languages](#): includes a variety of resources in French, Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Dari, Farsi, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Korean, Pashto, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Serbian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, Twi, Urdu and Vietnamese.
- [Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre](#): includes a variety of resources in French, Farsi, Korean, Punjabi, Simplified Chinese and Traditional Chinese.