

# Parents and caregivers

## Tips for social distancing and coping with stress

Children and young people are powerful agents of change. They are our next generation of caregivers, skilled trades, teachers, scientists, and doctors. Any crisis presents the opportunity to help them practice compassion and build a safer, more caring community. Here are a few ways to reduce their fear and anxieties and help them cope with changes to their routine.

### Know the facts

Understand the basic information about COVID-19. If your kid asks you a question, be comforting, and tell the truth – if you don't know the answer, say so.

### Help kids cope with stress

#### Teach kids how they can protect themselves and their loved ones against illness.

- Social distancing, or being at least 6 feet apart, may be difficult to understand. For younger children, suggest they extend their arms to the side like they are flapping their wings. Their fingertips should not touch anyone else's fingertips.
- Role model good hygiene. Wash your hands with soap and water often, and always before eating.
- If your kid goes to pick up their school lunch, remind them not to linger.



#### Kids and teens often worry more about family and friends than themselves.

- Encourage your kid to talk about how they are feeling. As they hear that some people are at higher risk of severe COVID-19, they may worry for their loved ones like grandparents. Help them stay connected by texting, calling, or video chatting with them.



#### Remember that kids may have different reactions to stress.

- For some kids, change in routine can be difficult. Help them by creating a new routine, even if it is one small thing that is consistent each day (like talking before dinner).
- Help kids understand that it is OK to feel stress or anxiety at times. Helping them recognize it, and knowing that stressful times will also pass, will help them build resilience.
- Be patient and understanding.



## Take care of yourself too

Recognize the signs of stress that you are experiencing. Pay attention to your body, feelings and spirit. You may notice stress in your behavior (ie. trouble sleeping), your body (ie. stomachaches), your emotions (ie. feeling overwhelmed), or your thinking (ie. having trouble concentrating).

- Keep things in perspective. You will want to keep up to date on news about the outbreak, but set limits on how much time you spend reading or watching news about it.
- Keep yourself healthy. Eat well, drink plenty of water, get enough exercise, sleep and rest, and avoid excessive caffeine, tobacco, and alcohol.
- Relax your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, and do fun activities.
- Talk about your feelings with loved ones, and stay connected. A text, a phone call, or video chat makes a difference. Keep your distance physically, but not emotionally!



## Find ways to help each other

- Talk to your friends and neighbors about how you can help each other (ie. drop groceries or take-out on a neighbor's doorstep).
- Consider what child care options are available. Try not to rely on people (such as those over age 60 or with underlying health conditions) who are at high risk for severe disease from COVID-19.
- Only purchase what you need. It is important for people who are at high risk of severe COVID-19 to reduce the amount of time they spend in crowds. By leaving enough things like toilet paper, soap, and canned goods, those individuals will be able to get the supplies they need in one trip rather than multiple trips. That will help them, and everyone in our community, stay healthy.

## Helpful tools

- [How to talk to talk to your child about COVID-19](https://kidshealth.org) (KidsHealth.org)
- [Just for Kids: A Comic Exploring the New Coronavirus](https://www.npr.org) (npr.org)
- [Stop the spread of germs](https://www.cdc.gov) (cdc.gov)

**For more information:** [www.healthygh.org/covid19](http://www.healthygh.org/covid19)  
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