COVID-19 Resource Guide for Parents & Families

Contents

Talking to Children about COVID-19

- Keep explanations age appropriate
  - Toddlers and preschoolers may have limited awareness about COVID-19, but are likely to notice the impact and changes.
    - [Helpful videos and ways to talk about COVID-19 with young children.](#)
    - [How to answer your child's questions about changes resulting from COVID-19.](#)
  - Early elementary children need simple information about being safe at home and about hygiene practices.
    - [*The Corona Virus Free Printable*](#)
  - Upper elementary and early middle school children will likely ask questions about safety and what will happen. Be sure to provide basic factual information (e.g., discuss community efforts to prevent germs from spreading through social distancing). These children may need help separating reality from rumor/fantasy
    - [Helpful resource for this age range.](#)
  - Upper middle school and high school students are able to discuss the issue in a more in-depth (adult-like) manner. Provide honest, accurate, and factual information, as sharing knowledge can help them feel a sense of control.
    - [For older children (parents should use their judgment on if their child is old/mature enough to understand), a comic exploring the new Coronavirus](#).
  - If you can't find the right words to explain COVID-19 to your children, check out [*Discussing Coronavirus with Your Children*](#) and [*Finding Right Words Talk Children Teen Coronavirus*](#).
- Monitor exposure to COVID-19 on social media and limit watching media outlets when children are around. Encourage your children to text or email as means of communicating to limit their exposure to information on the internet that may elicit fear or panic.
- Check in regularly with what your children know or may have heard so you can ensure they have accurate information.
  - Share information on how the virus spread and that not every respiratory symptom is COVID-19.
  - Discuss with your children how to prevent the spread, including the purpose of social distancing and washing hands.
  - Talk with your children regularly, particularly about their feelings. Support how they are feeling (e.g., "It is okay to feel scared. What could we do together to try to feel better?" - see coping section for ideas) rather than telling them not to feel a certain way (e.g., "Don't be scared").

- Feelings such as loneliness, boredom, fear, anxiety, stress, and panic are normal reactions to a stressful situation such as COVID-19.
- Refer to the table on pages 4-5 of the *factsheet* from NCTSN.
- Encourage good hygiene practice.
  - Wash hands for 20 seconds singing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star slowly.
  - Practice giving fist or elbow bumps.
  - Additional resources include:
    - *wash-your-hands steps*
    - *Handwashing-BOY-superhero*
    - *Handwashing-GIRL-superhero*
    - *Handwashing-Middle-School*

Child Coping Strategies

- Parents should be models for appropriate self-care, including staying connected to family and friends, getting enough rest, and participating in restorative activities (e.g., exercise, reading, meditation, walking)
- Have children practice a mindfulness activity daily to help slow down their minds & bodies. This can help to reduce stress and anxiety while improving well-being, focus, & presence. Examples include practicing yoga, going for a walk, and deep breathing.
  - *Mindfulness Handout*
  - Resources for yoga for kids:
    - YMCA Kids Yoga
    - 20 Minute Yoga for Kids Class
- Grounding techniques, particularly during periods of overwhelm and stress, can help to calm the body
  - *Grounding Exercise Guide*

Back to School Resources

Talking to Children About School

- Be honest when setting expectations for school environment and potential changes
- Children take cues from their parents about issues surrounding school - when there are big announcements from the school district about changes, try to process these with other adults in the family before presenting them to your child. Validate your child's feelings, and maintain open communication about their concerns.
- Children may feel anxiety (and excitement) about returning to school. Talk to your child about what they can do to stay safe at school (e.g. hand washing, wearing masks), and review new safety guidelines with them so they aren't surprised on their first day back.
  - If your child will be required or asked to wear a mask at school, try to practice extensively before their first day! It may help to build up slowly over time, and can be incorporated into other activities during the day (e.g. watching television, going to the grocery store). For younger children, it may be helpful to introduce masks for stuffed animals or incorporate them into play activities.

Setting up Home Learning & Work Environments

- For children who will remain in remote learning, establish a place in your home for them to do school work.
- Try to avoid children doing schoolwork in bed, as associating the bed with schoolwork instead of sleep can contribute to poorer sleep quality.
- Provide visual aids for children to allow them more independence during the school day. For example- write out your child's schedule or assignment list on a white board to allow them be more self-directed.
- For teens - work collaboratively to help your teen establish boundaries around school and social time. Use calendars or visual aids to support them as needed. Some teens may even benefit from "Video call homework hours" with peers, where they can have a video call going with peers in the same classes to support collaborative learning.
- Encourage breaks from screens throughout the day to avoid "Zoom fatigue". Talk to your children's teacher about printing off assignments or worksheets to allow children to spend less time on the computer if possible.

In-Person Resources

- CDC Checklist
- Tips for Helping Children Wear Masks

Virtual Learning Resources

- Parent Tips and Tricks for Distance Learning
- A Parent's Guide to Virtual Learning
- COVID-19 and Special Education

Creating a Schedule and Routine

- Keep bedtimes and meals consistent and incorporate physical activity
  - It is important to eat a balanced diet, get enough sleep, and exercise regularly to help keep the immune system strong.
  - CDC Exercise Tips
- Schedule in time for creative play.
  - Its important to use more than screens for learning (books, art, handwriting)
  - Taking short breaks are key.
- Make sure children spend quality time with family members within the house. Be sure to facilitate connections with other people that your children care about (e.g., extended relative, friends) through video conferencing, phone calls, texting, and writing letters.
- Parenting Role
  - Remember your job is as parent first – prioritize your role of creating a supportive, predictable environment before educational needs. Children will not learn optimally unless their basic needs are met and they feel secure.
  - Keeping children busy can be helpful, but balancing parental self-care is important, i.e., it is acceptable and encouraged to give age-appropriate independent activities that will keep children occupied so that parents can have a break.
  - Be flexible! If your scheduling doesn't go according to plan, that is okay. Try to get clear on what matters each day and prioritize those things in order to avoid frequent arguments.

- Increase children's self-efficacy, which can promote children having a feeling of agency and control. Give them an active role in various activities, such as providing visual rather than verbal reminders to wash hands (see resources above), assisting in food preparation for the family, and even contributing to community activities (e.g., writing letters or creating art for older adults or sick friends, dropping off items to neighbor's front door).
  - Make a schedule and post it in a place they will see it every day.
    - *Daily Schedule Example*

Addtional Childcare Resources

- The YMCA is offering Scholastic Support Centers apart of the Families and School Together (FAST) program. Several locations throughout the Triangle are available.
- School-Aged Childcare Supervision Services and Options
- Team members can visit the DukeList to post links to virutal schools, camps, or utilize to locate individual resources.
  - To add a resource to DukeList:
    - Click on "Post a Listing" (upper right-hand corner, blue box)
    - Fill out "Title of Post" (e.g. Museum of Life + Science offering day camp)
    - Where it asks for department, select whatever fits you best (remember this is a University site, so selecting "general" is fine, too.)
    - Under "Category," select "Supporting Staff and Faculty During COVID-19," then select "Child care/Virtual Learning for Faculty and Staff"
    - Use the description box to type in a brief sentence and link to the resource.