

Tips for Parents During COVID-19

Talking to Your Children About COVID-19, Safe Care and Social Distancing

Model ways to stay safe, healthy and socially distanced from others.

The new virus, COVID-19, has caused stressful changes in our lives along with the need to explain these changes to our children. This is the time to model and teach your children how to stay safe, healthy and socially distanced from others.

If your children are babies or toddlers, you will have to help them take action, such as washing hands often. Older children and teens can learn safe care themselves, although they may need reminding!

Why this big effort?

Currently, there is not a cure or vaccine for this virus, which can cause serious symptoms such as fever, cough and shortness of breath. Children do not seem to be at high risk; however, anyone can carry the virus and pass it on to other people, even without symptoms. So we all need to practice safe care to protect each other.



Safe Care Tips



Wash their hands as often as possible with soap and water.

Help your children be Handwashing Heroes. Sing a song, like “Happy Birthday,” twice to help them scrub their hands for at least 20 seconds.



Cover coughs and sneezes.

Show children how to sneeze and cough safely. They should sneeze and cough into their elbow or a tissue.



Keep their hands away from their face.

Remind children that touching their nose, mouth and face brings germs from their hands into their bodies.



Clean, clean, clean.

Clean high-touch surfaces together: light switches, door knobs and handles, remotes, phones and devices, faucets and countertops.

Help your children understand social distance – 6 feet.

Social distancing means keeping space between you and other people outside of your home. Teach your children to be 6 feet apart from people that do not live in your home. Practice by measuring. This can be a fun way to combine learning and safety!

Is it possible to social distance with other children?

Social distancing is easier with infants and older children. It will likely be harder for toddlers and preschoolers to understand how to stay away from their friends and others. *This means no playdates.*

Can we have a playdate if it is outside?

No. It is really hard for children to stay 6 feet apart. It is even harder for them to remember not to share or touch toys, bikes or other items that did not come from their home. Older children may be better able to social distance, but it will be very hard to supervise this in younger children.

Can we play at playgrounds?

No. Children should not play on playgrounds at this time. Playgrounds encourage children to gather, and it is very hard to maintain a 6 foot distance on a playground. There are also lots of surfaces that are touched often and playgrounds are not cleaned after each touch.

Can we go outside during social distance time?

Yes! There is so much to do outside. Enjoy it! Make sure you choose outdoor locations that are not crowded. Even when outdoors, you should only be close with the people who live with you in your home. Keep 6 feet away from all others.

Do my children need to wear a mask?

If your child is at home or practicing social distancing in an outdoor space, they do not need to wear a mask.

If you take them to public places where it is hard to stay 6 feet away from other people, such as a store or post office, they should wear a mask. Let your children help make or choose their mask, so they can show it off. Babies can be kept in their car seats with a blanket draped over the top.

Have virtual visits!

Use screen time as a family. Apps like Skype, FaceTime, Zoom and Google Hangouts are great tools for connecting with family and friends. Try adding some extra fun by having a virtual playdate or dance party, playing a game or having someone read your child a story.

Should I worry about all the extra screen time?

While limits are still important, it's understandable that during this time, children's screen media use will increase. They will likely use screens for school, virtual playdates and connecting with family. Try to keep basic screen time rules. This will help children to have a sense of order and balance, and make it easier when things go back to normal.

Check in with your children about their feelings.

These changes are hard on everyone and affect our feelings. Ask your children how they're feeling and make time for your own feelings too. If you need help, ask people you trust. Reach out.

Remember:

Be gentle with yourself. This is a challenging time for everyone, and Dartmouth-Hitchcock Health is here for you and your children.

Additional Resources:

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.healthykids.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov

World Health Organization
www.who.int