



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Parenting Children During COVID-19



SUPPORTING CHILDREN

COVID-19 has had a big impact on families. Physical distancing requirements have meant that children could not go to school or daycare in the early months of the pandemic. Even after schools re-opened, children's time with friends and ability to do the activities they enjoy has been limited.

Parents may be struggling to support their children while they themselves may be feeling stress and uncertainty. Remember our Elders' teaching that children did not choose to be born, and it is our responsibility to love and honour them.

TIPS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN DURING COVID-19:

- **Establish regular routines.** Children need healthy routines in order to feel good. Going to bed at the same time and getting up at the same time is important for kids, even if their daily activities have changed. Having meal times at about the same time every day also helps children feel that their lives are predictable.
- **Use bedtime routines to connect.** These rituals can be a nice way to spend time with our children and check in at the end of the day. When we are bathing our younger children, reading them a story or helping them brush their teeth, we are helping them feel a sense of "normal".
- **Manage our own emotions.** Children feel the energy of the grownups around them. If we are anxious and stressed as parents, our kids will pick up on this and can respond in many different ways, which can make our parenting job harder.
- **Take care of ourselves.** Self-care is important and helps us be calmer parents. When we can take a bit of time for ourselves, we can relax and be more present for our children.



- **Comfort our children.** Children don't always have the words to talk about how they are feeling or tell us what they need. Often, the best way we can support them is to get closer to them, give them a hug, sit beside them and be calm, so that they can start to feel okay again. When babies need soothing, we pick them up and comfort them. Although your child may be too big to pick up, sitting with them and providing physical contact lets them know that we are there and that we care.
- **Talk to our children about COVID-19 and physical distancing in age-appropriate ways.** It is normal for children to have questions and worries, so we need to find ways to give them the information they need, without overwhelming them. The conversations we have about COVID-19 with a four-year-old will be different than those we have with a 10-year-old.
- **Limit children's social media exposure.** Make sure that children are watching age-appropriate content on their devices. Take a break from the news if it is feeling overwhelming.
- **Create some new family traditions.** Can your family play cards or games together on a certain night? Are there puzzles you can do together? Can you phone family members or grandparents to say hello and check-in on a certain night of the week? Can you make cookies together?
- **Be aware of changes in your children that might signal that they are worried or feeling stressed.** Are they having a hard time falling asleep? Has their appetite changed? If you notice changes, ask them how they are doing and if there is anything you can do to help them. Reassure your child that they are okay, and that it is your job to keep them safe and protect them. Remind children that there are "grown-up" problems and "kid" problems and that their job is to be kids.
- **Be okay with uncertainty.** As we all go through these challenging times, we need to accept that we don't have all the answers. We should allow ourselves to focus on the simple things we can have some control over and try to enjoy ourselves along the way.
- **Think of the memories we want to create during these difficult times.** What are the stories that we want our future selves to tell about this time? We have the power to create happy memories, and we have the power to tell stories about our resilience, our strength and our sense of humour along the way!

RESOURCES

Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve created some helpful resources on child development:

- [Keeping Kids Active During the Pandemic](#)
- [Early Learning & Childhood Development: Activities](#)
- [Early Learning & Childhood Development: Family Connections](#)