

Parenting during COVID-19



Parents, caregivers and children across the country may face ongoing challenges as the pandemic continues to affect their daily work and home routines. Provincial and territorial governments have developed reopening plans with specific advice on schools, daycares and workplaces. It's important that parents and caregivers become familiar with these plans to prepare for the year ahead.

The ideas and tips below can help parents and caregivers adjust to the current situation.

Support and engage with your children

- › **Create opportunities for quality one-on-one time with each child**, whenever possible. One-on-one time makes children feel loved and secure, and shows them that they are important.
- › **Help your child stay connected** with their friends, neighbours and extended family members through email, phone calls, video chats and social media platforms. This can be a reassuring way for them to interact with people they love. Make sure to follow your provincial or territorial government guidelines if you're considering social gatherings.
- › **Create a flexible but consistent daily routine**, and involve your children! Asking for their input and allowing them to make decisions helps build their self-confidence. Set up a schedule that includes structured activities, physical activity, as well as free time. This can help children feel more secure.
- › **Play and engage with your children**. It helps them to learn, express their feelings and build their self-confidence. Spend time with your children by taking part in their preferred activities. If you are not in quarantine (self-isolation) or isolation, **get fresh air** while keeping a distance of at least 2 metres from other people.

Be kind, calm and patient with your children's behaviours

- › **Listen to your child's concerns**. Acknowledge and validate their thoughts and feelings. Be honest, open and supportive. Provide clear, factual information in a reassuring and age-appropriate way. Ask them how they are feeling. Let them know you are there for them.
- › **Encourage positive behaviours**. Children are much more likely to do what is asked if they are given positive instructions and praise for their efforts.
- › **Be a positive role model**. Model healthy and positive behaviours as children learn almost everything by watching what other people do.
- › **Take steps to calm down before you react**. Children may respond to stress and anxiety by acting out. They need you the most when they are misbehaving.
 - Before you respond, take three deep breaths or count to ten. Staying calm helps you stay in charge of the situation.
 - If you can safely leave your child, take a step back from the situation to calm down, and reassure your child that you will be back.
 - Respond in a calm and thoughtful way, and redirect your child's attention to a good behaviour.



Talk about vaccination

Talk to children and youth aged 12 and older about the importance of getting vaccinated. Explain how the vaccine can help protect them and those around them from COVID-19. Getting youth fully vaccinated also helps everyone get back to what they love and need for their physical and mental health, including:

- › being with friends and family
- › extracurricular activities, like sports and games
- › going back to school

Visit us to learn more about COVID-19 vaccination:

- › Canada.ca/covid-vaccine

Take care of yourself

› **Self-care is important.** Parents and caregivers take better care of their children when they take care of themselves, too. Eat well, get enough rest, take breaks, and do something fun or relaxing. Be kind to yourself. Some individuals may use substances, such as alcohol and cannabis, as a way to cope with stress and anxiety during difficult times. However, substance use presents potential health risks and can negatively impact your mental health and wellbeing. If you use substances, do your best to minimize the amount and frequency that you consume, and try to avoid using substances around children.

› **Connect with others.** You are not alone. Find support and relieve stress by talking about your feelings and concerns with your friends and family. If you're thinking about social gatherings instead of virtual means to connect with others, make sure to follow your provincial or territorial government guidelines.

› **Recompose yourself.** Practice a one-minute mindfulness activity. Notice your thoughts. Notice how you feel emotionally. Notice if your feelings are happy or not. Notice how your body feels. Notice anything that hurts or is tense. This will help you relax and feel grounded.

It is normal if you or your children feel overwhelmed, stressed, confused, scared or angry during this time. Visit us to find additional information and support related to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- › Canada.ca/coronavirus

