



HELPING PARENTS DURING COVID-19

Primary School-Aged Children (5-12 years)

Parents and family members can play an important role in helping children cope with the many changes to daily life that have occurred due to the COVID-19 outbreak. As parents it is important we remember that all children need extra love and attention from adults during stressful or difficult times.

Signs of stress in primary school aged children

Children aged 5 years and upwards are starting to understand their world more clearly. However, similar to adults, children of primary school age will vary in their reactions to the COVID-19 outbreak and social distancing. Some children will move through with relative ease and others will experience more challenges and stress.

Signs of stress in primary school aged children may include:

- Increased anxiety, worry, sadness, irritability or “acting out” behaviours
- A change in eating or sleeping habits, usually for the worse
- Regression to pre-school behaviours, such as bed-wetting, sleeping with a favourite teddy or sleeping in bed with parents at night
- More clingy, “needy” behaviours or the need to be close to parents and caregivers
- Avoidance or withdrawing of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or aches and pains
- Attention or concentration problems

Tips to support your 5-12 year old

- Be available for your child. They may need a little extra “quality” time with you, which will help them feel safe.
- Talk to them about how they are feeling, especially those related to COVID-19 or their isolation, and explain to them that it is normal to feel worried. **Keep communication open, but non-alarmist. Be honest but reassuring and keep it fact-based and developmentally appropriate.**
- Monitor and limit exposure to media and news coverage. Try to be with your child when they are watching or listening to the news so you are able to address any questions or concerns they may have.
- Give your child a sense of control by explaining what they can do to stay safe. Reassure them that COVID-19 is less common and severe in children compared to adults.
- If you’re keeping your distance from friends or relatives you may like to help your child remain connected to them by phone or video. This is especially important if your child is worried about other family members such as their grandparents.
- Guidelines for school-age children recommend 1 hour or more of moderate to strong physical activity daily. If you are minimising time outside, there are a number of exercise programs online such as [fun cardio workouts](#) or other [online exercise programs](#)
- According to The Conversation we should “forget old screen ‘time’ rules during the coronavirus” and focus instead on three important factors 1) time spent using the screen; 2) the quality of screen contents and; 3) who they use the screen with. See more info here: [Screen Time Tips](#).

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