

COVID-19 (Coronavirus): Learning Supports for Families and Teachers

It is easy to become overwhelmed when attempting to navigate through the daily information shared about the COVID-19 pandemic. This document was created to provide support for parents/guardians when sharing information about the coronavirus with young and school-aged children. The document is also useful for early learning staff and Prekindergarten to Grade 12 teachers. (Educators may refer to pages 7-13 of this document for further supports and curricula connections.)

General Information about COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The most recently discovered coronavirus causes coronavirus disease COVID-19.

Please visit the [Government of Saskatchewan COVID-19](#) website for the most up-to-date information. The following links may be of interest to families:

- [About COVID-19](#);
- [Social Distancing](#);
- [Self-monitoring](#); and,
- [Self-isolation](#).

If symptoms feel worse than a standard cold, see a health care provider or call HealthLine at 811. If HealthLine 811 recommends you seek acute care, they will provide instruction to call ahead.

The Government of Saskatchewan has a [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#) to determine if individuals should be tested for COVID-19.

As of March 20, 2020, the Saskatchewan Chief Medical Officer **imposed a public health measure that all travellers returning from international destinations, including the United States, are subject to a mandatory self-isolation order.**

Be cautious of scammers and criminals who may try to use the coronavirus panic to defraud the vulnerable, particularly seniors. Authorities would not and will not sell identifying information about COVID-19 patients, and tests for the virus can only be administered by health authorities. Please remember not to give out your health card and credit-card numbers if anyone posing as the Public Health Agency of Canada offers to sell a prescription for COVID-19 prevention; there is currently no treatment or drug available to fight COVID-19.

For further information, please refer to:

- [Government of Saskatchewan](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

Talking with children about COVID-19

News about COVID-19 is everywhere. While young children may not be able to grasp too many facts about the viral pandemic, they no doubt are able to understand that their routine, and that of their family, has changed. They may also feel anxious about what they *do* comprehend, for example, the fact that many people are getting sick. Older children can perhaps understand much of the information presented in the media, but they may be feeling confused as they sort through materials that they see and hear, and anxious about the future. While adults want to share truthful information, they may be unsure of when to share, how much to share, or ways to share. The following sections provide ideas for talking with children, ages 5 – 9 and ages 10 and older.

Before undertaking any of the suggested activities with your children, please visit the [Government of Saskatchewan COVID-19](#) website for the most up-to-date information regarding public spaces, interacting with others and social distancing.

Children ages 4 -9 years old

Note: Questions in this section are from the perspective of the child.

What is Coronavirus?

- Discussion Points:
 - It is a virus like having the flu or cold.
 - It is spread by germs.
 - There are ways to stop germs from spreading.
- Activity Suggestions:
 - Ask your child to tell you what they know about germs and how to help stop them from spreading (e.g., coughing into their elbow, staying home when they are sick, washing your hands).
 - Together make a poster with the title *I Stop Germs When I*. Add ways to stop the germs and then hang the posters around the house.
 - Watch and discuss the video “Germ Smart” (click [here](#)).

Am I going to get sick? Are you going to get sick?

- Discussion Points:
 - Discuss what is being done to stop the spread of germs in your household and community (e.g., staying home from school, only going shopping for important things like food, medicine and household supplies, staying away from playgrounds and large groups of people).
 - Talk about keeping space between people for the time being.
- Activity Suggestions:
 - In the house practice what social distancing means (e.g., meeting up with others when outside – space, smile, small talk).
 - Create a plan in case of sickness – if you get sick this is what I will do – if I get sick this is what I want you to do.

Why can't I play with my friends who are not sick?

- Discussion Points:
 - Sometimes people can spread the germs without being sick.
 - We are not sure who people have been in contact with or where they have been.
 - We do not want our friends to feel bad if they passed germs onto us or if we passed germs onto them.
- Activity Suggestions:
 - Setup online groups for children with friends and schoolmates.

Why are you not going to work? Are we going to be poor?

- Discussion Points:
 - Review conversations about social distancing and stopping the germs from spreading.
 - Talk about setting priorities – what we need to stay healthy, cutting back.
 - Talk about how people in the community and the government help.
 - If appropriate, discuss:
 - what it means to work from home;
 - being laid-off; and,
 - unemployment benefits.
- Activity Suggestions:
 - Make a list of items – have the child separate them into needs/wants.
 - Brainstorm different ways to help people in the community (e.g., ways to check-in on people who live alone, offering to pick-up groceries for neighbours).

Children ages 10 and older

How do I begin to talk with a child about COVID-19?

- Invite children to talk and ask questions. They may have found out a lot about COVID 19 already, and may have numerous questions about the reliability of what they know, and specifically how COVID 19 affects them.
- Share information in an age-appropriate way, being truthful, but at the same time without being sensational.
- Watch for signs of anxiety in a child, and while assuring them that it is natural to be worried or scared about a serious issue, it is also a time when you, as a caregiver, will do everything you can to make sure the family is safe. Be aware that you are setting the emotional tone of the conversation.
- Remember to avoid language that might blame others in any way. Talk about how some information we have access to might be inaccurate or based on rumours.

What if I can't answer their questions or if we are confused about information in the media?

Take this as an opportunity to explore reputable websites together. Students over the age of 10 are capable of researching reliable informational sites, preferably together with an adult.

- The [Government of Saskatchewan COVID-19](#) website and [Government of Canada website](#) give updates, information on risk, symptoms and treatment and also offers a section on Canada's response to the pandemic.
- The [World Health Organization Coronavirus website](#) offers advice about protecting yourself, travelling, research, and even on busting myths related to COVID 19.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) contains [reliable information](#) under headings such as "What You Need to Know" and "Resources for the Community."

What are some positive things we should be talking about during this time?

- There are always those around us who are the "helpers." Look for stories of people who are working to keep our communities those who are helping people with acts of kindness.
- Brainstorm ideas of ways to be caring and compassionate in your community. Could you write a cheerful message to someone? Share your artistic talents through social media? Draw a picture to display in your front window? Write a chalk message on the sidewalk?
 - [Voices of Youth](#) is an example of a site where youth are sharing positive messages.
- Focus on what individuals can do to stay safe. Children will have already heard about the importance of washing hands, cleaning surfaces, not touching their faces and staying home and away from other people. Emphasize to children how they can do their part in containing the spread of the virus.

- Find ways to have children stay in touch with friends and extended family members. This may be as simple as a phone call or through many other forms of technology. Enjoy socializing, even at a distance.

What if my child seems anxious during and after our conversations?

- Remind children that they can talk to you anytime. Even if conversations are difficult, you will always listen and care about them and their concerns.
- Try to remain calm and in control. If you are feeling anxious yourself, reach out to family, friends or others in your community who will help you relax before continuing your conversation with a child.

For further information, please refer to:

- [Parenting in the Time of COVID-19](#)
- [How to Talk to your Child About Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [Talking with Children about Coronavirus Disease 2019: Messages for Parents/guardians, School Staff, and Others Working with Children](#)
- [Talking to Kids About the Coronavirus](#)
- [Hand Washing Video](#)

Ways to Support Child and Family Mental Wellness

The COVID-19 pandemic is extremely challenging as it is disrupting school and work life, daily routines, activities all the elements of normalcy that solidify our lives. Children especially will find this time confusing and scary. They may also sense the anxiousness and fear in adults. It is important to recognize and acknowledge that it is normal to experience some level of anxiety and fear. It is also essential to express this to children.

How can I help children manage stress?

- Keep informed but be mindful of information overload.
- Look for accurate and credible sources (see below) and avoid unfamiliar websites and social media sources that sensationalize information.
- Try to deal with problems in a structured way to avoid becoming overwhelmed. Identify concerns and divide the problems into more manageable parts such as, things that need to be done today, ones that can wait until another day and ones that can be dropped.
- Seek out positive connections with others who will not increase your anxiety and fears.
- Foster resilience (ability to overcome or recover from significant challenges) in yourself and in children and try to avoid worst case scenarios.

What can families do to maintain normalcy during this stressful time?

- Seek balance and involve children when establishing a healthy home routine that includes exercise, planning times for unplugging from the media and keeping regular sleeping schedules.
- Routines do not need to mirror a day at school.
- Blend learning with daily chores, tasks and projects.
- Build relaxation and physical activities into daily routines.
- Engage children in empowering activities.
 - Involve younger children in daily chores that give them responsibility and feel they are contributing to the family well-being, such as helping with the dishes, planning meals, playing games or reading to younger siblings.
 - These [resources for families](#) offer ideas about how to support children with routines and expressing emotions and feelings.
 - This [parental resource](#) offers tips for families including age-appropriate responses to common questions, a guide to self-care, and activities for young children experiencing social distancing.
 - Involve older children with home projects such as, preparing healthy meals, organizing and leading family physical activities, meditation and relaxation sessions, or board game sessions. Visit [here](#) to see some tips.

What can be done if further support is needed?

- Sometimes a family member may still continue to struggle to cope. If you feel someone is experiencing symptoms of intense or excessive anxiety encourage them to consult with a health expert.
- There are also other community supports available such as, family doctors, clergy, psychologist and community mental health facilities.

For further information, please refer to:

- [Saskatchewan Health Authority](#)
- [Canadian Mental Health Association](#)
- [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#)
- [Anxiety Canada](#)
- [Canada Mental Health Commission](#)

Curriculum Connections and Additional Supports for Teachers

Young children benefit from reassurance that they are safe. Encourage proper handwashing, coughing into their elbow, proper nutrition and physical distancing as actions to stay safe. Limit the amount of exposure to the daily news for very young children. Be willing to answer questions that children have and clarify their understanding without overwhelming them with complicated details or technical information.

Handwashing: Explain the importance of washing our hands during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Video: [COVID-19 Germs Experiment for Kids](#).

This PDF story guide, *A Curious Guide for Courageous Kids*, offers a child friendly format to engage in conversation about the Coronavirus. This guide is available in 17 languages: Italian, English, German, Spanish, French, Japanese, Bulgarian, Albanian, BCS, Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Portuguese, Hungarian, Polish, Russian and Greek. More translations are being created. Check back often. The guide may be found [here](#).

For ideas to support conversations with children, please visit: [How to Talk to your Child](#).

Something Strange Happened in my City: A social story about the coronavirus pandemic for children offers families a social story with real images of children to discuss the coronavirus pandemic. This social story provides a guide to discussing the pandemic with young children. It may be found [here](#).

Marvel and Friends. Staying Clean and Healthy: Proper Hygiene for Kids can be found [here](#).

Opportunities to Address the Topics in Health Education Curricula

Health Education: English	Interdisciplinaire et Bien-être : French Immersion
USC1.1 Examine healthy behaviours and opportunities and begin to determine how these behaviours and opportunities may affect personal well-being.	É-DV.8 Prend conscience de son corps et de ses responsabilités envers son corps.
DM1.1 Examine initial steps (i.e., Stop, Think, Do) for making basic choices regarding healthy behaviours; healthy brain, heart, and lungs; healthy relationships; pedestrian/street safety; and a healthy sense of self.	AP-DV.11 Détermine les moyens utilisés pour satisfaire : ses propres besoins et désirs; les besoins de sa communauté.
USC2.3 Develop an understanding of how health may be affected by illness and disease.	3CHC.4 Déterminer les actions ou gestes possibles pour l'amélioration de sa santé et celle de sa famille ou des gens de son foyer.
DM2.1 Demonstrate how, why, and when to ask for help and/or advice when discovering healthy connections related to thoughts-feelings-actions, healthy snacking, affects of illness/disease, respect, safety, and diversity.	4CHC.4 Déterminer la responsabilité personnelle en matière de sécurité et de protection dans une variété de situations.
AP2.1 Act upon health-related understandings, skills, and confidences to make healthy connections related to personal thoughts-feelings-actions, healthy snacking, affects of illness/disease, respect, safety, and diversity.	4CHC.6 Évaluer des stratégies saines de gestion du stress et de l'anxiété.
USC3.4 Understand what it means to contribute to the health of self, family and home.	5CHC.3 Évaluer l'impact des maladies infectieuses et des maladies non infectieuses sur le bien-être holistique, y compris le VIH/sida et l'hépatite C.

USC3.5 Evaluate safe behaviours/practices to increase the safety of self and others while at home.	6CHC.3 Déterminer les moyens de transmission et l'impact des maladies infectieuses, comme le VIH et l'hépatite C sur : la santé physique, mentale, affective et spirituelle des personnes; les identités personnelles, familiales et communautaires.
USC4.4 Determine basic personal responsibility for safety and protection in various environments/situations.	6CHC.4 Démontrer des stratégies de saine gestion de soi dans les situations perçues comme stressantes.
USC4.6 Assess healthy stress management strategies (e.g., relaxation skills, stress control skills, guided imagery, expressing feelings, exercising).	7CHC.1 Déterminer des stratégies pour aligner ses balises personnelles et son comportement dans les contextes quotidiens.
DM4.1 Investigate the importance of personal responsibility and communication in making informed decisions related to healthy eating and physical activity, prevention/management of health challenges, negotiating disagreements, safety and protection, personal identity, and stressors.	8CHC.1 Analyser et établir des stratégies de soutien efficaces pour aider les autres à accroître les comportements salutaires.
USC5.3 Analyze how infectious diseases (including HIV and Hepatitis C) and non-infectious illnesses/diseases challenge holistic well-being.	9CHC.2 Démontrer les bienfaits d'une approche globale de la sécurité sur le bien-être y compris : l'individu; la famille; la communauté; l'environnement.
USC 6.3 Demonstrate an understanding of how noncurable and serious but treatable infections, including HIV and Hepatitis C infection, are transmitted and how these infections influence the health (i.e., physical, mental, emotional, spiritual) and the identities of self, family, and community.	M.4 Déterminer le rôle et l'impact de la sante mental sure le bienêtre global de soi, de la famille et de la communauté.

<p>USC 6.4 Assess and demonstrate strategies used to identify and make healthy decisions in stressful situations.</p>	<p>M.9 Mettre à exécution des actions stratégiques pour contrer certains défis liés au bien-être communautaire.</p>
<p>USC 7.1 Establish and use strategies to commit to and act upon personal standards (see grade 6) for various aspects of daily living over which an individual has control.</p>	
<p>USC 8.1 Analyze and establish effective strategies of support for purposes of helping others increase health-enhancing behaviours.</p>	
<p>USC 8.3 Investigate and analyze the impact of in/formal supports and services (including testing/ diagnostic services) available to individuals, families, and communities infected with/ affected by non-curable and serious but treatable infections/diseases (including HIV and Hepatitis C).</p>	
<p>DM 8.8 Appraise the role of “support” in making healthy decisions related to family roles and responsibilities, non-curable infections/ diseases, violence and abuse, body image, sustainability, and sexual health.</p>	
<p>USC 9.2 Analyze how the well-being of self, family, community, and the environment is enhanced by a comprehensive, community approach to safety.</p>	

<p>DM 9.10 Assess the role of health promotion in making healthy decisions related to comprehensive approaches to safety, non-curable infection/diseases, romantic relationships, healthy food policies, addictions, tragic death and suicide, chronic illness, and sexual health.</p>	
<p>W1 Evaluate one’s understanding of wellness while participating in various learning opportunities that balance the dimensions of wellness (i.e., physical, psychological, social, spiritual, environmental).</p>	
<p>W4 Assess the impact of mental health on overall well-being of self, family, and community.</p>	
<p>W9 Assess challenges related to community well-being and take action to address these challenges.</p>	

Opportunities to Address the Topics in Science Curricula	
HB5.1 Analyze personal and societal requirements for, and the impact of, maintaining a healthy human body.	5SH.1 Déterminer l'importance de maintenir un corps en santé et les répercussions de ne pas maintenir un corps en santé sur l'individu ou la société.
HS20-DT1 Explore the tools and procedures used to diagnose and monitor medical conditions.	20SS-DT.1 Explore les outils et méthodes employés pour diagnostiquer et surveiller des problèmes de santé.
HS20-DT2 Assess the importance of interpreting diagnostic findings to support treatment options for specific pathologies.	20SS-DT.2 Expliquer l'importance de l'interprétation des résultats des examens diagnostiques dans l'établissement des options de traitement.
BI30-LE1 Explore how scientific understandings of life and its characteristics change in light of new evidence.	30BIO-VÉ.1 Explorer comment la compréhension de la vie et de ses caractéristiques changent compte tenu de données nouvelles.
BI30-GB3 Explore the impacts of historical, current and emerging biotechnologies on self, society and the environment.	30BIO-GB.3 Explorer les répercussions des biotechnologies historiques, contemporaines et émergentes sur : soi-même; la société et; l'environnement.
Opportunities to Address the Topics in Social Sciences Curricula	
RW5.2 Hypothesize about economic changes that Canada may experience in the future.	6PA.1 Distinguer les formes de pouvoir manifestées chez les individus et dans les familles, les communautés et les nations, y compris : la force; l'autorité; l'influence.
PA8.2 Examine the role of power and authority in the application of diverse decision-making processes in a variety of contexts.	7PA.3 Juger des forces et des défis relatifs de la démocratie, de l'oligarchie et de l'autocratie comme modes de gouvernement.

P20.6 Assess impacts of individual behaviour on relationships and society.	8PA.1 Examiner divers processus de prise de décision dans une variété de contextes.
P20.7 Investigate connections between mental health and personal environment in relation to holistic development and behaviour.	20P.6 Évaluer les impacts du comportement individuel sur les relations et la société.
LAW30-CV3 Explore how civil law impacts the daily lives of Canadians.	20P.7 Analyser les liens entre la santé mentale et l'environnement personnel en relations avec le développement holistique.