Support during self-isolation

Resources for Families

Wellbeing Tips for Families

Firstly, **remember you are not alone**. There are thousands of families in the same position. This is new to everyone.

• Share the load. If both parents are at home try to share the childcare, or even better spend time together as a family.

• Routine makes everyone feel safe. When our routine is disrupted, we can all feel at least a little bit anxious or stressed. This is the same for children and is completely normal. It is helpful to keep a routine where you wake up at a set time and have some activities timetabled in throughout the day. The children could be involved in creating the routine, so they feel part of it, rather than it being imposed on them. Don’t be afraid to change it if it doesn’t work.

• While routine is important, it is also important to be flexible. You know your children – if they need a break then let them. Maybe ease them into the new routine after a few days to just come to terms with what is happening. Use what you already know works. Their emotional wellbeing is more important than any learning work they do.

• Think about how you want your children to remember this period in their lives when looking back on it. Include in your schedule some regular family times so that you can create some fun, special moments as a family and/or with your children individually. Do things that you know most of you will like, and maybe take it in turns to decide what you do. Try to find a good balance between time together, time spent alone and screen time.

• Keep active – this could be together or separately. Try and ensure the children have a period of exercise every day. If it is not possible to go outside to do exercise, insider options include:

* Herts Sports Partnership are regularly updating their Covid-19 specific physical activity information, with useful content for young people and adults. <https://sportinherts.org.uk/coronavirus>
* Joe Wicks is doing daily live PE sessions on YouTube: <https://www.thebodycoach.com/blog/pe-with-joe-1254.html>.
* Oti from Strictly Come Dancing is doing daily dancing routines: <https://www.youtube.com/user/mosetsanagape/videos?disable_polymer=1>.
* Child-friendly yoga, e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga>).

• Keep in good contact with friends and family (e.g. via Facetime, Skype, WhatsApp etc.) following NHS guidelines on social contact. This will help children connect with others and know that others are thinking about them. It will also reassure them that others are well. Examples of ways to connect with people virtually include: doing something together like making a cake or card, watching something at the same time so you can talk about it, online games on various apps, or setting online challenges for you and your friends to complete.

• If your child is too young to play independently for a long time, use screens if you need to in order to get housework done or some downtime for you. This doesn’t have to be TV or gaming if you don’t want it to be, there are lots of live streams and children’s activities (yoga, reading, sports, music etc.) on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. You could even consider asking grandparents to read a book or run a cookery session over a video call. It is helpful to set limits on screen time, but it is likely that the use of screens will be increased during this time. There may be some activities that relate to learning online or using apps, but it is a good idea to keep this separate from their fun time and have rules around this. This may also involve ensuring appropriate content filters are on the devices and/or the use is supervised. There is a separate section on keeping safe online below.

• Think about what you are grateful for today and what went well. This could be something you achieved, something you enjoyed (e.g. the sunshine) or something another person did. It can be nice to look back at these individually or as a group. You can record this in different formats for example, a gratitude diary/journal, a gratitude wall or fridge or a gratitude jar. Information on how to start one is here: <https://coffeepancakesanddreams.com/2019/04/29/how-to-start-a-gratitude-journalfor-kids-families/>.

• Look after your own wellbeing. It is important for adults to look after themselves as much as possible so they can be there for their child to support them as best as they can. Being together all the time is intense, and time to recharge is absolutely necessary. You will need to spend some just each day just for yourselves. It may be helpful to make it obvious to the children when you are taking this time, e.g. by using a closed door with a sign on it, setting a specific time of day for no interruptions or wearing big earphones.

**Additional Resources**

**Just Talk**: Mental health and wellbeing information for parents, professionals and young people, including a dedicated Covid-19 page containing quality assured resources and information, and five ways to wellbeing ‘at home’ checklists for primary and secondary school aged children, and for adults .

**The British Psychological Society** has produced information for those parents specifically with young babies during this time that may be helpful: <https://www.bps.org.uk/blogs/guest/parenting-young-babies-whilst-self-isolating-andsocial-distancing>.

**Zero to Three** has a lot of information for parents of toddlers, including ways to talk to them about what is happening and activities you can do with them. It also has specific ideas for if you are separated from your child during this time: <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3210-tips-for-families-coronavirus> .

**Child Mind** has a lot of information on supporting children and yourself: https://childmind.org/coping-during-covid-19-resources-for-parents/. There is also advice aimed at single parent families - <https://childmind.org/article/single-parenting-during-thecoronavirus-crisis/> .

**Health for Kids / Teens** cover subjects that promote a healthy body and mind. All of the content has been produced by school nurses, a whole range of other health and wellbeing experts, and most importantly young people. Ages 11-19: <https://www.healthforteens.co.uk/hertfordshire/> and primary age: <https://www.healthforkids.co.uk/> (There’s also a section for grown-ups).

This website has a lot of information to support routines and emotional wellbeing of

children at home: <https://makesociallearningstick.com/keep-calm-and-structure-on-how-tomanage-emotions-and-build-structure-at-home-during-covid-19>.

This website is aimed at parents of children with special needs, but a lot of the information

is applicable to anyone. Also includes an easy-read guide to coronavirus (see next section):

<https://www.specialneedsjungle.com/calming-coronavirus-anxiety-children-everyoneelse/#Update>.

**How to Talk to Children About Covid-19**

It is important to talk to your children about what is happening, as not knowing can be worse.

Children are also likely to ask questions to you during this time.

**Here are some tips on how to talk** to them about what is happening, along with some resources to help you know what to say:

• If they are reluctant to talk, it may be best to try and have a chat while doing an activity (particularly if you can do it when side-by-side), like walking the dog, doing the washing up or driving in the car.

• **Start by asking them** about what they have heard about the virus and the situation. Ask open questions (e.g. “What makes you feel that way?”; “What have you heard about the virus?”, “What are your worries about this”?).

• It is important to **listen to their concerns and acknowledge** them without minimising them.

• If relevant, you may be able to **correct any misconceptions** that children have about

the virus, but don’t say anything if you are unsure about it. Use information from trusted sources.

• Talk about how they can help themselves (e.g. washing hands, keeping 2m away from

people, cough into tissues/their elbow). Follow government/health guidelines.

• Depending on the age of the child, you may end up having to answer the same questions a number of times. This is also completely normal, just **answer it again.**

• You should try to remember to **keep things positive and give children hope**. For example, tell children that now many people are working to make this better and that even though it is serious, everyone is doing their best to help people. Reassure them that this will pass, you’re there for them, and you will get through this together.

• It can be helpful to **explain to your child that anxiety is a normal human emotion**, and a certain level of it can be helpful. You can talk about how it feels in their bodies, as not all children will know this. For example, notice the signs that they feel anxious (e.g. red face, heart beating faster, speaking faster etc.).

• **Sharing your own worries** may be helpful so that you are being open with them – don’t pretend that things are still the same. Make sure you are also clear about how you manage your feelings and try to remain calm in front of them. Don’t expect these same strategies to work for your children though.

• At the end of the discussion, **remind your children that they can have other difficult conversations with you at any time**. Remind them that you care, you’re listening and that you’re available whenever they’re feeling worried

**These links have advice on how to talk to your children about Covid-19:**

• <https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/talking-children-about-coronavirus>

• <https://krisepsykologi.no/what-can-we-say-to-children-about-coronavirus/>

• <https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/28>

• <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-talk-your-child-about-coronavirus-covid19>

• YoungMinds has a page for parents, **particularly around if teenagers won’t follow social distancing** guidelines: <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/forparents/supporting-your-child-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

• This link has a useful visual of answers to some particular questions from children:

<https://twitter.com/PhoenixLCG/status/1247454169759449089>

• <https://emergingminds.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID19_advice-forparents-and-carers_20.3_.pdf>.

**Here are some guides for explaining Covid-19 that you can share directly with children**:

• <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ccochildrens-guide-to-coronavirus.pdf>

• <https://riseandshine.childrensnational.org/covid-19-faqs-for-kids/>

• For older children, share websites such as the NHS:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>.

For children who need something **more visual**, there are social stories to read with them:

• Available in several languages: <https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>

• <https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020->

03/Information%20about%20Coronavirus%20ER%20UPDATED%20130320%20SD%2

0editsAH.pdf

• <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Childrens-storyabout-coronavirus.pdf>

• <https://theautismeducator.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Corona-Virus-FreePrintable-Updated-2-The-Autism-Educator-.pdf>

• <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pandemics-andthe-Coronavirus.pdf>

**• Illustrated by Axel Scheffler (Gruffalo books):**

<https://issuu.com/nosycrow/docs/coronavirus_ins/1?ff&hideShareButton=true>

• <https://www.makaton.org/Assets/Store/FreeResources/CoronavirusInfo.pdf>

• https://www.sccoe.org/news/featured/Documents/Coronavirus%20Social%20Story

%20-%20Cheri%20Palladino.pdf

• <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/coronavirus-social-situation-t-s-2548770>

• Webpage: <https://paautism.org/resource/coronavirus-social-story/>

• <https://www.flipsnack.com/KeshetChicago/coronavirus-social-story/full-view.html>

• **Comic:** <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/justfor-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus?t=1584464333506>

• **Focused on social distancing**: <http://qrcgcustomers.s3-eu-west1.amazonaws.com/account4876975/6583599_4.pdf> and <https://www.elsasupport.co.uk/social-contact-story/>

29

**• Focused on staying at home:**

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59d4c55f268b96ae9afd7ec3/t/5e78cd9330f

1866dd97161cc/1584975262405/Be+a+Home+Hero+PDF+%281%29.pdf

**• Handwashing social story**: <https://paautism.org/resource/hand-washing-socialstory/>

• Children may also struggle with **school closure**, especially as it is not a holiday or typical

break and not something that they have causes. This can impact on their sense of

belonging, connectedness and disruption to their learning. Here are some short social

stories:

* <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/School-is-Closed-SocialStory-FREEBIE-Interactive-Color-BW-5333335>
* <https://www.andnextcomesl.com/2020/03/free-printable-school-is-closedsocial-story.html>
* <https://acesaba.com/blog/school-is-closed-social-story/>

**There are also a number of videos**:

• **Suitable for KS2/3:**

<https://www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus/>

• **Cartoon**: <https://twitter.com/BelfastTrust/status/1242116526137843714>

• **Coronavirus: Your questions answered:**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51861089>

• **What is being done to tackle the virus:**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51204456>

• **Coronavirus: What you need to know**: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51342366>

• **For older children:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOV1aBVYKGA&feature=youtu.be>

• **Video explaining why NHS staff are wearing masks**:

<https://www.facebook.com/campaignformybrain/videos/2663510840640841/>