

## Assisting Children with the COVID-19 Pandemic

Children are highly attuned to their loved ones behavioral and emotional cues during the COVID-19 pandemic. Stress reactions in children vary based on their age, and these reactions may not occur immediately. The following strategies may help your children understand and cope with the rapid changes that are occurring.

	<p><b>Behavioral changes are common</b> and demonstrative of your child's reaction to stress. Recognize that fear and anxiety are normal reactions to a stressful situation. Allow regression to previously outgrown behaviors on a temporary basis.</p> <p>Provide reassurance and demonstrate patience. It is also important to listen and validate your child's concerns.</p>
	<p><b>Limit exposure to news and social media reports</b> relating to the COVID-19. Do provide your children with the opportunity to ask questions about the pandemic, and provide factual answers in an age appropriate manner.</p> <p>Answering questions and discussing fears as a family will provide reassurance and decrease fear.</p>
	<p><b>Create new and maintain regular routines.</b> For all children, maintaining a regular meal and bedtime routine is very important. Attempt to normalize these as much as possible.</p> <p>With the loss of school routines, encourage children to maintain contact with their peers through the phone or internet. Schedule activities with your children and provide choices.</p>
	<p><b>Explore fears and worries.</b> Young children may interpret the pandemic, or ill family members, as something they are responsible for causing.</p> <p>Reassure them that is not the case, and the pandemic and consequences are not their fault. Provide information about things that could happen, in a reassuring way.</p>
	<p><b>Build resilience as a family.</b> What traditions or hobbies do your family have? Integrate these when feasible.</p> <p>Consider cooking meals together, playing together, calling family and friends together. Discuss protective steps that everyone in the family can take.</p> <p>Children will desire opportunity to become involved. Give them information on how everyone is working together to reduce the risk of becoming sick (ie: handwashing).</p>