



PARENTING

Tips for Pandemic Parenting

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Family life has turned upside down since March 2020 thanks to COVID-19. The pandemic has interrupted routines, paused or canceled plans, and made daily life look very different.

As COVID-19 prevention guidelines continue to evolve, here are some tips for parenting during an ongoing pandemic:

- 1. Talk to your child in a way they can understand** about what's going on. Tell younger kids that this germ can make people sick, and that everyone can do their part to help keep themselves and others safe. Older kids can understand that the coronavirus is spread through coughing, sneezing, touching faces and even talking. Talk to them about how their actions can affect the health of others, and how practicing social distancing, wearing masks and washing hands often can help limit the virus spread.
- 2. Teach your kids to wear their masks properly.** Encourage them to practice putting on and taking off face masks the right way — pulling by the ear loops and folding the outside edges together. Gently remind them not to touch their faces or masks, and have them wash their hands after removing their masks.
- 3. Explain and encourage social distancing.** Kids are excited to return to school and see their friends. Talk to them about how important it is to follow social distancing guidelines to avoid spreading germs that could make them and their friends sick. Be a role model by practicing this behavior for your child when you go out together.
- 4. Discuss school changes.** Talk to your child about why their teachers, school bus drivers and others in school may wear masks. If a new schedule keeps them from being in the same class as their friends, let them know that scheduling policies aim to limit germ spread. Encourage them to make new friends in their new classes and help them “see” their old friends by connecting virtually.

5. **Encourage emotional expression.** Let your child know it's okay to feel frustrated, confused, sad or any other emotions about what's happening. It's also okay to let them see your feelings and to talk about them together. Kids benefit from seeing adults experience emotions (even uncomfortable ones) to understand that all feelings are normal. Adults can model how to work through these emotions, which helps kids learn how to handle their own feelings.
6. **Resume a routine — or create a new one.** Instead of going to the movies on Friday night, make some popcorn and have a movie night at home. Enjoy takeout from your favorite sit-in restaurant. If extracurricular activities are canceled, have a family game or trivia night. While these activities don't look exactly like what your family is used to, they can help a child feel that not everything has changed.
7. **Take care of yourself.** Feeling a little isolated, overwhelmed, and/or exhausted is normal and expected as the pandemic continues. Taking time to recharge your own batteries by doing something you enjoy — exercise, art, reading — will help keep you healthy physically and mentally.

These links from the American Academy of Pediatrics provide helpful information and offer more helpful tips for parenting during the challenges of the pandemic.

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Return-to-School-During-COVID-19.aspx>

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Parenting-in-a-Pandemic.aspx>



References

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CDC. (2020). How to wear masks. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wear-cloth-face-coverings.html>