

Don't forget your children's mental health!

If your children are worried about the pandemic, the following advice can help you to better support them during the coronavirus COVID-19 events in Québec.

The current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the unprecedented preventive measures that have been implemented are a new reality, one that can be especially difficult to deal with. Just like you, your young children and teenagers may worry about what is happening.

Whatever your children's age, they need to be reassured and know that they can count on you and feel that you will protect them.



Listen to them

Allow your children to express their feelings in their own words or through play (dolls, drawings, etc.). Listen to their concerns and their need for reassurance. Respond to their fears with kindness and give them a lot of love and attention.

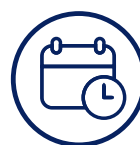


Speak to them frankly when explaining things

Use simple words that are age-appropriate. Explain that very easy-to-use hygienic measures are there to protect them, including regularly washing their hands, coughing into the crook of their elbow, etc. Show them how they work.

Keep a positive outlook and tell them that doctors and scientists are hard at work on solutions that include medicine and a vaccine. Respond to their questions and always tell them up front when you don't know the answer for now.

Avoid moralizing with your teenager. Ensure that the situation is well understood by your teens and correct any wrong information that they express. Do not minimize the situation and encourage them to call a telephone support hotline if they feel the need.



Keep to your family routine

A family routine and a stable environment are the best ways to maintain your children's sense of security. Ensure that the daily schedule includes wake-up, bedtime, eating, games and structured activities and leaves time for relaxation. Make a healthy lifestyle your priority: Eat right, drink a lot of water, stay active, and try to relax and sleep enough.



Make room for playtime and relaxation

It is so important for your children to find comfort by playing and doing activities they enjoy.

Short of solutions?

Physical activity: Dance, obstacle races, skipping rope, games of skill, stationary cycling, yoga, playing in the back yard, aerobics, bodybuilding, etc.

Creative pastimes: Drawing, crafts, painting, writing, singing, origami, plasticine, knitting, photography, etc.

Games: Board games, blocks, role-play, memory games, hide-and-seek, cards, and dress-up, jigsaw puzzles, crosswords, Sudoku, hidden word, etc.

Entertainment: Listen to music, watch movies and shows, podcasts, TV series, etc.

Relaxation: Read a book or a fairy tale, magazine or comic book; meditate, do relaxation exercises, etc.

Educational activities: Do homework, browse an educational website like ecoleouverte.ca, learn a new language, visit virtual museums, etc.

Other: Cook, help out with the housework, sort photos, etc.



Signs of stress in a younger child

- ✓ Trouble sleeping
- ✓ Displays concern, wants to be held, asks questions
- ✓ Complains of physical pain like tummy ache
- ✓ Behaviour is agitated and challenges you
- ✓ No longer wants to play and doesn't enjoy favourite activities anymore
- ✓ Displays regressive behaviour such as bedwetting



Signs of stress in a teenager

- ✓ Worries about the health of friends and themselves
- ✓ Feels unaffected by the situation or minimizes the danger
- ✓ No longer interested in favourite activities
- ✓ Trouble sleeping, appetite changes (eats too much or not enough)
- ✓ Wants to drink alcohol or take drugs
- ✓ Is aggressive, irritable and refuses to obey public health orders



Take care of yourself

Your children experience events through your eyes. Be attentive to their feelings, emotions and reactions. If you feel it necessary, take a few minutes off by yourself to calm down, in the bathroom, for example.



Maintain virtual social links

Allow the children to maintain their virtual links with friends and/or other family members, such as their grandparents. An active social network helps fight isolation. There are a variety of ways to communicate and even play without being physically present: telephone, chat rooms, video calls, social networks, email and the Web.



Stay informed

You need to stay well informed about what's going on to keep calm when interacting with your children. Always rely on trustworthy resources, like the Government of Québec website: Quebec.ca/coronavirus

Do not let your children loop television reports about the pandemic, and avoid alarmist conversations about the number of deaths, the deterioration of the situation, pessimistic scenarios, etc. with them.

When should I seek help?

If you see no improvement in your child's outlook despite all your efforts at reassuring and comforting or if you observe that the negativity is persistent or even grows in intensity, contact Info-Social at 811 (option 2).

You will receive more information and be directed to a psychosocial health professional that can provide support and advice that meet your needs.

Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons should dial 1 800 361-9596 (toll free).

Resources

Managing worry:

- inspq.qc.ca/en/tiny-tot
- ecolebranchee.com (French)
- carrefour-education.qc.ca (French)

Adopting healthy lifestyles:

- defisante.ca (French)
- force4.tv (French)

Managing family time:

- ecoleouverte.ca
- alloprof.qc.ca (French)
- teteamodeler.com (French)
- viedeparents.ca (French)
- naitreetgrandir.com (French)
- vifamagazine.ca (French)

Telephone resources for people needing support or a friendly ear:

- Tel-Aide
This listening centre provides help 24/7 to people suffering from solitude, distress or who need to have someone listen:
Go to www.acetdq.org for contact information on your regional listening centre.
- Écoute Entraide
Community organization that supports people who are emotionally suffering: 514 278-2130 or 1 855 EN LIGNE (365-4463)
- Tel-Jeunes
24/7 hotline for youngsters in need of support: 1 800 263-2266
- LigneParents
24/7 hotline for parents in need of support: 1 800 361-5085

Telephone hotlines for people in psychological distress or contemplating suicide:

- Regroupement des services d'intervention de crise du Québec
24/7 services for distressed people (French): centredecrise.ca/listecentres
- Telephone assistance service
1 866 APPELLE (277-3553)

Quebec.ca/coronavirus

1 877 644-4545