



Talking To Your Child About COVID-19

Talking to your children about COVID-19 can be difficult to do. It's understandable that your children may be feeling overwhelmed and anxious when their routine has completely changed. They are no longer attending child care or school, they are unable to play with their friends and they are spending more time at home. Not only is it a confusing time for them, but it may be confusing for parents and caregivers as well.

Here are some suggestions from KidsHealth.org to help you speak with your child about COVID-19 and explain social distancing:

- Educate yourself first! Your child may have questions or have heard information about the virus. Make sure you have the correct information when talking to them. Check out <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en> or <https://www.cdc.gov/> to update your knowledge regarding COVID-19.
- Begin by asking your child what they know about the virus by using age appropriate questions such as, "Do you know why you can't play at preschool?" or "Have your friends been posting about the virus online?" If they aren't interested in the subject, that's ok. Let them know you are there if they have any questions.
- If they ask you a question that you don't know the answer to, it's ok to say you don't know. Take this opportunity to look up the correct information together and if they are old enough, show them how to properly research on the web.
- Try to stay calm when you are talking about COVID-19. Children can be very observant and may notice if you are worried or scared.
- Allow them to share how they feel. This may be a scary time for some children so ensure you are there to hear them express their concerns and reassure them when they are scared. Let them know it's ok to feel this way.
- It is also okay for you to share your own emotions. Acknowledging that you may be feeling a variety of emotions can help to model that all emotions are okay, and share what you are doing to help experience your emotions in a healthy way.
- Be aware of social media. There is so much information being shared on various platforms and not everything will be age appropriate or correct.
- Let them feel in control of their environment. Teach them about how important it is to wash their hands and that regular hand washing stops the spread of viruses. If they bring it up, explain that it is rare to die from the virus and reassure them that nurses and doctors are here to help us if we get sick.

How do I explain social distancing to my child?

Has your child asked you why they aren't going to school, child care, dance class, hockey and so on? Maybe they have asked you why you are not going to work anymore. Children may also be confused as to why they have been spending so much time at home with their family recently.

Explain to your child that in order to keep everyone safe and healthy, we need to keep our space from others. When we put space between ourselves, we are stopping the spread of the virus to other people. You can let them know that social distancing includes:

- Not going to school, child care and after school activities like hockey practice, karate class, etc.
- Not going out to eat dinner or shopping at stores most stores
- Not going over to a friend's house or having a friend come to your house
- Staying away from parks and playgrounds
- Finding new and creative ways of having fun at home!

Here are some fun ways you and your child can stay social with family and friends!

- 1) Let your children video chat or call their friends and family to stay connected. There are so many things you can do over video chat or phone:
 - Let an aunt or uncle read them a bedtime story
 - Your infant or toddler can play peek-a-boo
 - Sing songs together
 - A school age child can learn a new skill from an adult
 - Dress up and put on a play for grandma and grandpa
- 2) Record a good morning or goodnight message and send it out
- 3) Let your child have a playdate with a friend over video chat
- 4) Write a letter or draw pictures and leave them in someone's mailbox or on their front step
- 5) Go for a drive and wave to family and friend's through the window

If you require assistance in supporting your child's needs at this time, please contact your Resource Consultant with ChildInU Oxford. Visit <https://www.childinuoxford.com/about/meet-our-team/> for their contact information.

If you are feeling overwhelmed with the stress of the pandemic, there are a variety services that are available for free, tele-counselling appointments.

Contact Wellkin for tele/virtual support/ counselling or 24 hour Crisis Support call 1-877-539-0463.

Contact CMHA Oxford at 1-800-859-7248 ext 210 to access walk-in counselling through pre-booked telephone sessions.

Oxford County Community Health Centre 519-539-1111 ext 207 or 201 for tele-sessions on Wednesdays.

Woodstock Hospital 519-421-4223 for tele-sessions on Thursdays.