

Staying healthy at home

Many parents, carers and their children will now need to be at home to stop the spread of coronavirus. Below are some useful suggestions for staying emotionally, physically and mentally healthy during this challenging time. We hope this information provides you with helpful ideas you can adopt within the home.

How to look after your family's health and emotional wellbeing during this time:



Eat right

Eating healthy meals will strengthen your immune system and boost your mood. Children especially need to eat healthy and balanced meals to help them grow, develop and thrive. Try to prepare meals that include: a variety of vegetables (fresh, canned or frozen); starchy foods such as potatoes, rice or pasta; and protein such as beans, fish, eggs or meat. Stay hydrated by drinking 6 to 8 glasses of water daily. Between meals, eat healthy snacks such as fruit slices, yogurt, chopped vegetables with hummus, plain crackers, plain popcorn and rice cakes. Remember to limit sugary snacks as they can cause tooth decay, poor concentration and weight gain.



Top tips:

Get your children involved in planning and preparing meals. This can also be a great way to incorporate some maths learning into their day. It can be challenging to think of new recipes that are quick, healthy and easy. The [change4life](https://www.change4life.org.uk/) website have lots of ideas. Encourage your family to start the day well with either porridge or whole-wheat biscuits such as Weetabix with fruit, yogurt and milk.



Keeping physically active

Physical activity, such as going for a walk, scooter or bike ride, will boost your immune system, improve your mood and reduce anxiety levels. Just remember to adhere to government guidance and only go outside two people at a time if possible. Children and young people need to be physically active for at least 60 minutes every day and this can be spread out throughout the day. If you are required to self-isolate, try to keep physically active at home with your family by dancing to music, doing yoga or following along to online workouts.



Top tips:

[Change4Life](https://www.change4life.org.uk/) has great indoor activities and their 10 minute Disney shake up game is great for getting children active. [GoNoodle](https://www.gonoodle.com/) provides great movement videos including yoga and mindfulness and has recommended off-screen activities. Adults can choose between 500 free workout videos from [Fitness Blender](https://www.fitnessblender.com/) or explore [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/) for specific types of exercise.



Looking after children

Children of all ages will need what they've always needed during these challenging times; love, attention, opportunities to learn, interaction and play.



Top tips:

Keep a routine and a structure. Map out a schedule with your child that includes time for learning, homework, meals, exercise, relaxation and bedtime. Keeping bedtime and morning routines close to existing ones promotes a sense of normality that children find reassuring. For older children, the app [Habitica](#) might be helpful to plan the day.

Expect stress. Remember that stress and anxiety are normal feelings for you and your children to experience in uncertain times. Naming these emotions can support children and young people to make sense of them.

Normalise the new experience. Remind your children that many other children and families around the world are experiencing the same unusual situation.

Find opportunities for them to interact with their friends remotely. Younger children may enjoy supervised 'virtual playdates' or opportunities to show their friends things they have made or stories that they have been reading. For teenagers, contact with their peers is especially important.

Balance screen time with other activities. Challenge children to learn new skills that don't involve screens and encourage getting active or reading a book instead.

Play with your children – it is fundamental to their development and wellbeing at all ages and helps reduce stress in adults too. Explore the [National Literacy Trust](#) for fun activities to do together.



Emotional wellbeing

Taking care of our own emotional wellbeing is something we should all do. If the news is making you anxious, try and limit the amount that you watch and read. Stay connected with friends and family on either social media, email, phone or video chat. This will be especially important if you are self-isolating. Regular physical activity is associated with lower rates of anxiety across all age groups. You can join in on exercises and activities with your children.



Top tips:

There are several emotional wellbeing platforms available to children and young people. [Kooth](#) offers online anonymous counselling to children and young people between the ages of 11-18 years. [NHS Go](#) is a free confidential health advice and information app for 16-24 year olds. For adults, you can use [Good Thinking](#) online, which provides wellbeing self-care that supports anxiety, low mood, sleeping difficulties and stress. After answering three short questions, the website signposts you to free resources which can offer tailored support.

Talk to your child

Your child will be hearing about coronavirus and may be feeling anxious. It is important that you make them feel safe and aren't afraid to talk to them about the current situation. Don't volunteer too much information, as this may be overwhelming, instead try to answer any questions they might have and reassure them. Focus on what you are doing to stay safe, such as staying inside, keeping a 2 metre distance from other people outside, and keeping up with regular hand washing for 20 seconds.