

Coping with the Stress of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Transitions, and New Variants

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a huge change in the way we live our lives. It is common to feel stressed.

What kind of stress can Covid-19 cause?

➤ Social isolation	➤ Fears about the virus
➤ Job changes	➤ Unemployment
➤ Financial problems	➤ Changes in childcare or school setting
➤ Change in normal daily routines and hobbies	➤ Feeling uncertain about the future



Are mood changes and anxiety normal reactions to long-term stress?

- It is normal for children and adults to start having more anxiety and mood changes. When we are in stressful situations for a long time, we may start to feel different symptoms in our body.

What are some symptoms of anxiety?

➤ Worrying	➤ Fatigue
➤ Difficulty sleeping	➤ Muscle aches
➤ Hard to concentrate	➤ Stomach aches
➤ Always feeling tense or nervous	➤ Behavioral changes in children

What are some symptoms of depression?

➤ Intense feeling of no hope	➤ Poor energy levels
➤ Intense feeling that you are worthless	➤ Sleeping problems
➤ Poor motivation	➤ Poor concentration
➤ Not finding interest and joy in things we enjoyed before	

What are common symptoms of feeling depressed or anxious that we see in children?

➤ Seeming irritable (easily upset, angry)	➤ Showing difficulties in school
➤ Acting moody (ups and downs in their mood)	➤ Showing more Oppositional/defiant behavior (argues or does not want to listen to adults)

What are some things we can do daily to reduce the stress from the pandemic?

- Stay in contact with our loved ones virtually. We may not be able to see our friends and family as often in-person because of the pandemic. Stay in touch by:



➤ Sending text messages	➤ Video chats
➤ Phone calls	➤ Social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
➤ Virtual gatherings (Zoom, Google hangouts, Whatsapp, etc.)	➤ Online video games (if appropriate for the child's developmental age)

- Limit how much we watch and listen to news and media each day.
 - The news can be stressful, especially during the pandemic
 - Find information from your local public health authorities and public health websites such as the Center for Disease Control (CDC) or the California Department of Public Health.
 - Try not to read or watch news sources or social media that might cause fear or panic.
 - Check in regularly with your children about what they have viewed on the TV or Internet and talk about any fears or misunderstandings.
- Encourage open conversations with the whole family.
 - Allow time each day for everyone to discuss their feelings and worries.
 - Children may need help expressing their feelings through drawings, play, and other activities.
- Keep a consistent daily schedule
 - Work/school time, mealtimes, relaxing activities, exercise, and bedtimes should be relatively consistent from day to day.

- Have children create drawings and schedules for daily routines: reminders to wear a mask when going out of the house, handwashing and social distancing reminders, and exercise plans.
- Add fun family activities into your daily schedule!



- Some ideas include board games, playing music and dancing, watching a show or movie together as a family, cooking, playing charades, drawing pictures, reading, telling stories, and exercising.
- Try to get outside every day, even if it is just for a few minutes. Getting sunlight is important for our mental and physical health and helps us sleep better.
- Make hygiene and health fun!
- Involve children in household chores and activities so they feel like they're an important part of the family.
- Provide children with plenty of praise and positive reinforcement (verbal and physical rewards) for helping with household chores and practicing good hygiene.
- Help reduce stress in the body with simple things that can be done every day:

<p>Support (friends, family, caregivers)</p> 	<p>Good Sleep</p> 	<p>Good nutrition</p> 	<p>Physical Activity</p> 
<p>Meditation/Mindfulness</p>  <p>(mental training that focuses your attention to feel calm and have positive emotions)</p>	<p>Nature</p> 	<p>Mental health</p> 	

How do I make sure my children and I are safe at school?

Many children are transitioning back to in-person school this year. Here are some important tips to think about to make sure that everyone stays as safe as possible:

- Continue to follow all public health guidelines regarding wearing masks.

- All children entering schools may be required to wear face coverings for their protection and the protection of others around them.



- It is highly recommended that everyone over 2 years of age continue to wear masks in all public settings, regardless of vaccination status.
- Keep your children home if they are feeling sick and contact their primary care doctor.
- All people 5 years and older should receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

How do I find more help and support?

- Find support from a medical professional or mental health provider in the following situations if you or your loved one are:
 - having symptoms of depression or anxiety that are more overwhelming and difficult to manage
 - having thoughts of hurting oneself or others or having thoughts of suicide
 - using drugs or alcohol to deal with your problems
 - involved in dangerous or risk-taking behaviors

Where else can I find support for mental health needs?

- Contact the LA County Department of Mental Health Access Center at (800) 854-7771.
- The number for the Suicide Prevention Hotline is (877) 727-4747.
- SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 or by texting TalkWithUS to 66746.

Additional Online Resources

- **Talking to children about COVID-19:**
 - <https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-coronavirus> (also available in Spanish)
 - <https://www.chla.org/careless-corny-book-kids-about-the-coronavirus> (also available in Spanish)
 - <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Building-Resilience-in-Uncertain-Times.aspx> (also available in Spanish)
 - <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Talking-To-Children-About-Tragedies-and-Other-News-Events.aspx> (also available in Spanish)
 - Resources specifically for teens:
 - <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Teens-and-COVID-19.aspx> (also available in Spanish)
 - Recommendations for children with autism:

- <https://www.autismspeaks.org/news/tips-managing-children-home-during-covid-19> (also available in Spanish and Vietnamese)
- COVID-19 and Mental Health:
 - <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Signs-your-Teen-May-Need-More-Support.aspx> (also available in Spanish)
- **Ideas for daily activities:**
 - <https://biglifejournal.com/blogs/blog/stay-at-home-printable-pack-families>
 - <https://www.gonoodle.com/>
 - <https://www.gonoodle.com/tags/W2gjaX/vamos-gonoodle>
 - Siblings:
 - <https://pathways.org/siblings-playing-together/>
 - https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/Pages/Sibling-Synergy.aspx?_gl=1*9137op*_ga*Mjc5MDI0OTQzLjE2MzIxNzE2ODY.*_ga_FD9D3XZVQQ*MTYzOTE3NzQzNC4xLjAuMTYzOTE3NzQzNC4w&_ga=2.47176103.1410937876.1639177435-279024943.1639171686 (available in Spanish)

***References available upon request.**