



# COVID-19: KEY MESSAGES FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

## AUTUMN TERM

### ***Introduction***

It is important to understand basic information about coronavirus disease (COVID-19), including its symptoms, complications, how it is transmitted and how to prevent transmission. Stay informed about COVID-19 through reputable sources such as the Western Australian Health Department and advice from the Western Australian Government.

- [https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/A\\_E/Coronavirus](https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Coronavirus)
- <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-the-premier-and-cabinet/covid-19-coronavirus-community-advice>

### ***Monitor your child's physical health***

- Recognise the symptoms of COVID-19 (coughing, fever, shortness of breath).
- If your child is sick, keep them home from school and notify the College of your child's absence and symptoms.
- Seek medical advice by first calling your health facility/GP and, if advised, contact the National Coronavirus Helpline: 1800 020 080.
- Remember that symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough or fever can be similar to those of the flu, or the common cold, which are a lot more common.
- Explain to your child what is happening in simple words and reassure them that they are safe. <https://www.telethonkids.org.au/campaigns/covid19/Keeping-your-family-safe/>
- If your child is not displaying any symptoms such as a fever or cough they can attend school – unless advised differently by a relevant health official.

### ***Monitor your child's mental health***

- Children may respond to stress in different ways. Respond to children's reactions in a supportive way and explain to them that they are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. Listen to their concerns and take time to comfort them and give them affection, reassure them they are safe and praise them frequently.
- Common stress responses include:
  - difficulties sleeping

- bedwetting
- having pain in the stomach or head
- feeling anxious, withdrawn, angry, clingy or afraid to be left alone.
- If possible, create opportunities for children to play and relax. Keep regular routines and schedules as much as possible, especially before they go to sleep, or help create new ones in a new environment.
- Provide age-appropriate facts and explain what is going on and give them clear examples on what they can do to help protect themselves and others from infection. Share information about what could happen in a reassuring way. For example, if your child is feeling sick and staying at home, you could say, “You have to stay at home because it is safer for you and your friends. I know it is hard (maybe scary or even boring) at times, but we need to follow the rules to keep ourselves and others safe. Things will go back to normal soon.”

### ***Encourage personal hygiene***

- Teach and model to your children good hand and respiratory hygiene practices for school and elsewhere, like frequent handwashing (see below), covering a cough or sneeze with a flexed elbow or tissue, then throwing away the tissue into a closed bin. Also, remind them to avoid touching their eyes, mouths or noses if they haven’t properly washed their hands. The recommended procedure for washing hands is detailed below:
  - Step 1: Wet hands with safe running water
  - Step 2: Apply enough soap to cover wet hands
  - Step 3: Scrub all surfaces of the hands – including backs of hands, between fingers and under nails – for at least 20 seconds
  - Step 4: Rinse thoroughly with running water
  - Step 5: Dry hands with a clean, dry cloth, single-use towel or hand drier.
- Wash your hands often, especially before and after eating; after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom and whenever your hands are visibly dirty. If soap and water is not available, use hand sanitiser.

### **Age-specific health education**

Below are suggestions on how to engage children of different ages on preventing and controlling the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses. Activities should be contextualised further, based on the specific needs of children (e.g. language, ability, gender).

#### **Early Years**

- Focus on good health behaviours, such as covering coughs and sneezes with the elbow and washing hands frequently.
- Sing a song while washing hands to practise the recommended 20 second duration. Children can practise washing their hands with hand sanitizer.
- Develop a way to track hand washing and reward for regular hand washing.

- Use puppets or dolls to demonstrate symptoms (sneezing, coughing, fever) and what to do if they feel sick (e.g. their head hurts, their stomach hurts, they feel hot or extra tired) and how to comfort someone who is sick (cultivating empathy and safe caring behaviours).
- Have children sit further apart from one another, have them practise stretching their arms out or 'flap their wings', they should keep enough space to not touch their friends.

### Junior School

- Make sure to listen to children's concerns and answer their questions in an age-appropriate manner; don't overwhelm them with too much information. Encourage them to express and communicate their feelings. Discuss the different reactions they may experience and explain that these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation.
- Emphasise that children can do a lot to keep themselves and others safe.
- Introduce the concept of social distancing (e.g. standing further away from friends, avoiding large crowds, keeping your hands to yourself).
- Focus on good health behaviours, such as covering coughs and sneezes with the elbow and washing hands.
- Help children understand the basic concepts of disease prevention and control. Use exercises that demonstrate how germs can spread. For example, by putting coloured water in a spray bottle and spraying over a piece of white paper. Observe how far the droplets travel.
- Demonstrate why it is important to wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water.
- Put a small amount of glitter in students' hands and have them wash them with just water, notice how much glitter remains, then have them wash for 20 seconds with soap and water.
- Have students analyse texts to identify high risk behaviours and suggest modifying behaviours. For example, a teacher comes to school with a cold. He sneezes and covers it with his hand. He shakes hands with a colleague. He wipes his hands after with a handkerchief then goes to class to teach. What did the teacher do that was risky? What should he have done instead?

### Middle School

- Make sure to listen to students' concerns and answer their questions.
- Emphasise that students can do a lot to keep themselves and others safe.
  - Introduce the concept of social distancing.
  - Focus on good health behaviours, such as covering coughs and sneezes with the elbow and washing hands.
  - Remind students that they can model healthy behaviours for their families.
- Encourage students to prevent and address stigma.
- Discuss the different reactions they may experience and explain these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation.
- Encourage students to express and communicate their feelings.
- Build students' agency and have them promote facts about public health.

## Senior School

- Make sure to listen to students' concerns and answer their questions.
- Emphasise that students can do a lot to keep themselves and others safe.
- Introduce the concept of social distancing.
- Focus on good health behaviours, such as covering coughs and sneezes with the elbow and washing hands.
- Encourage students to prevent and address stigma.
- Discuss the different reactions they may experience and explain these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. Encourage them to express and communicate their feelings.

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### CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS & COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- Encourage your children to ask questions and express their feelings with you and their teachers. Remember that your child may have different reactions to stress; be patient and understanding.
- Prevent stigma by using facts and reminding students to be considerate of one another.
- Monitor your child's health and keep them home from school if they are ill.
- Teach and model good hygiene practices for your children.
- Wash your hands with soap and water frequently. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Remember to not touch your face.
- Do not share cups, eating utensils, food or drinks with others.
- Check the College website and Direct Messages regularly to receive information about your child's education and wellbeing.