



HELPFUL TIPS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND TEENS DURING COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Your care team understands that this is an especially stressful time for our patients and families. Below are some common questions and helpful tips for supporting our patients during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Should I talk with my child/teen about COVID-19? Tips for doing this?

Although parents and caregivers understandably try to protect young people from scary realities, not addressing the situation could heighten fears. Tips are provided in a Michigan Medicine [blog](#) or through the hospital COVID-19 Update page at <https://www.mottchildren.org/coronavirus-covid-19-update-for-parents>. Quick tips:

1. Inform yourself first. You can find regularly updated information on the hospital's COVID-19 Patient Specific Guidelines page: <https://www.uofmhealth.org/covid-19-patient-specific-guidelines>.
2. Use developmentally appropriate, simple and honest language.
3. Provide reasonable reassurance and explain what is being done to keep them as safe as possible, like good hand washing, staying home much more, and many people working very hard to stop, treat, and cure the virus.
4. Follow their lead and validate their feelings. If they don't want to talk about it, you should stop and check in another time. It is understandable to feel sad, worried, angry, or even happy with the changes happening.
5. Bring opportunities for control and fun where you can.
6. Model healthy coping and take time to address your own feelings.

What if they ask about their health condition or medical care?

Again, we recommend simple, honest responses. We are still learning about COVID-19 and health conditions. It may be helpful to remind them that being careful about germs/infection and taking extra precautions are things your family has been practicing for some time. It is appropriate to assure them that while appointments may change or happen in new ways, their care team is committed to making sure they still get the best care while reducing unnecessary risks.

My child/teen keeps asking why is everything being cancelled? Is "social distancing" really necessary?

It is important to explain to young people that "social distancing" (staying away from friends, school, crowds, etc.) is necessary for slowing the spread of disease and keeping our loved ones and healthcare workers safer. We encourage all to stay connected virtually. Young people are especially skilled at doing this. They can be encouraged to video call a friend to do an activity or school assignment together, watch a movie with extended family through online hangout sites, or take virtual field trips with classmates. Monitoring social media safety remains important. Helpful ideas for [practicing social distancing](#) and managing [screen time](#) and [extra time at home](#) are available through the hospital COVID-19 website and social media pages.

My child/teen is seeming more anxious, sad, angry... what can we do to help?

These feelings are very normal and understandable in all of us, but may be greater for some young people with health conditions. The hospital social media pages will continue to feature helpful resources. Here are some quick tips:

1. Validate or give "names" to feelings, but do not dwell on things too much.
2. Help your child to find positive, distracting activities when negative feelings take over.
3. Encourage use of relaxation strategies, like deep breathing and mindfulness exercises.
4. Engage in healthy routines. Limit news/media exposure. Develop daily schedules together.
5. Together as a family, think of something good that happened each day.
6. Challenge those negative thoughts! Is this thought true? Is it helpful? Is there a more helpful thought I can focus on? Positive self-statements, focusing on one's resilience and strengths, can be especially helpful.