



# Panhandle Health District

*Healthy People in Healthy Communities*

**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Panhandle Health District**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 8, 2020

**Contact:** Katherine Hoyer  
208-415-5108

## **Children and COVID-19**

By Katherine Hoyer  
Panhandle Health District

The coronavirus, or COVID-19, has disrupted our lives in many ways and it can be especially hard for our children. They have been unable to socialize with their friends and extended family, they are virtually learning outside of a classroom setting, parks and playgrounds have been a no-go zone. Times are stressful and it is important to watch for signs of stress not only in ourselves, but also our children.

I'm sure I can't be the only one whose child has asked to see grandma, grandpa, cousins, and friends on a daily basis, right? Finding an answer that doesn't frighten or worry our children can be a struggle. Below are some helpful tips to keep a sense of calm within your home and watch for stress in your children, compiled from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the CDC.

### **Common signs of stress in children:**

- Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Irritability and "acting out" behaviors in teens
- Poor school performance or avoiding school
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

**Stay active and socially connected:**

- Encourage your child to play outdoors—it's great for physical and mental health. Take a walk with your child or go on a bike ride.
- Use indoor activity breaks (like stretch breaks or dance breaks) throughout the day to help your child stay healthy and focused.
- Reach out to friends and family via phone or video chats.
- Write cards or letters to family members they may not be able to visit.
- Stay in touch with your child's school

**Address children's fears and talk about COVID-19 using facts:**

Reassure your children that you are there for them and that your family will get through this together.

- **Use facts to answer questions and talk about COVID-19 with your children. Tell them things everyone can easily do to avoid becoming sick.**
- **Keep in touch with loved ones.** Children may worry about a grandparent who is living alone or a relative or friend with an increased risk of getting COVID-19. [Video chats](#) can help ease their anxiety.
- **Be the example. Let your children know that you are worried to, and ways that you are coping.**
- **Remain hopeful. Scientists are working hard at a vaccine and treatment for COVID-19.**

**Routines and Schedules are Beneficial:**

Although it is tempting to stay in our pajamas all day, raid the refrigerator when we feel like it, and binge the latest on Netflix, it is more important than ever to maintain bedtime, meal time and other routines. Routines create a sense of order to the day that offers reassurance in a very uncertain time. All children, including teens, benefit from routines that are predictable yet flexible enough to meet individual needs. Below is a basic schedule you can try to stick to with your family.

- Break up schoolwork when possible.
- Wake-up routines: getting dressed, breakfast and some active play in the morning, followed by quiet play and snack to transition into schoolwork.
- Afternoon: lunch, chores, exercise, some online social time with friends, and then homework in the afternoon.
- Evening: family time & reading before bed.

Don't forget to take time to take care of yourself. Moms, dads, and guardians should remember to eat healthy, exercise, and get enough sleep. Try to take breaks to avoid becoming overwhelmed and know that you are not alone in this struggle.

*Kootenai Health and the Panhandle Health District are actively working to share information about COVID-19 with our community. You can find the latest updates and ways to protect yourself at [cdc.gov/covid19](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19). If you have questions about COVID-19 or think you may have the virus, call the Panhandle Health District COVID-19 hotline at 1-877-415-5225.*

Sources: HealthChildren.org, American Academy of Pediatrics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

---

**Panhandle Health District** provides over 40 different public health programs to families, individuals and organizations in northern Idaho. From food and drinking water safety to health education and disease control, public health services are critical to ensure our community is a safe and healthy place to live, work and play.

The PHD team is made up of nurses, nutritionists, environmental health specialists, health educators and many other dedicated professionals with a common goal to deliver vital public health services.

Panhandle Health District is one of seven health districts in the state of Idaho.

# # #