

Coronavirus (COVID-19)



Supporting primary students' wellbeing and mental health during COVID-19: Advice for parents and carers

This fact sheet contains information for parents and carers to support their child's wellbeing and mental health as the repercussions of COVID-19 continue to impact the community.



Pay extra attention to your child's emotions and needs

2020 has been a challenging year for many people in our community. As uncertainty and worry related to COVID-19 continues, you may notice changes in your child's behaviour, sleep, mood, interactions with others, or eating habits. These are all normal expressions of worry and by noticing and responding with care and support, you will help your child to feel better.

As parents, it is important to be able to:

- recognise signs of increased anxiety, stress or worry.
- know that it is a normal reaction.
- help children feel safe and supported.



Be aware of your own behaviour

It is important to understand the effect your own behaviour can have on your child. If you react in ways that suggest you are worried, your child may worry too! Try to remain calm and positive when talking to your child about COVID-19 and issues affecting your family.



Reassure your child it is safe to go to school

During the learning at home period, your family, along with staff at your child's school, helped your child understand that staying away from school was necessary to keep them healthy and safe. As the pandemic continues, your child may now feel worried about whether it is safe for them to be at school. Their worry may be greater at the beginning of a new term feeling safe at home during the holidays.

To help your child feel safe and less worried about being at school, have clear and calm conversations and tell them the facts, including that:

- The decision for students to be back at school has been made based on health advice.
- Everyone at school is making sure they are safe, and there is plenty of soap at school so that everyone can wash their hands many times a day.
- They are allowed to sit next to their friends in the classroom and during group activities, as children like them usually do not get sick from COVID-19.
- The Government is keeping an eye on COVID-19 – if it starts to spread again, decisions about what we need to do to keep everyone safe will be made quickly.
- If anyone at their school feels sick, they will stay away from school until they feel better.



Prepare for changes to school processes

Changes to your school's normal processes may have been put in place to ensure physical distancing requirements for adults can be met. As changes are made, your school will communicate with you so that you and your child are aware of any changes and can prepare accordingly.

Changes to your school's normal drop off procedures may mean that you are unable to walk with your child to their classroom. Schools understand that this may be unsettling for you and your child, particularly if your child is anxious about leaving you. Be assured that your child's school will have adequate staff on hand to ensure students are safe at all times, including getting from the school gate to their classroom.

If you have any questions or concerns about any arrangements, you are encouraged to contact your principal.



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Establish a back-to-school routine

Establishing a routine with your child before and after school will help make being at school a positive experience.

Before the school day

- Establish a routine of waking up, having breakfast and going to bed at regular times.
- Discuss any issues or fears your child might have about school or anything.
- Talk to your child about what they like about school.
- At the start of a new term, talk through the routine of what it's like being at school.
 - For example, “when I get to school I go and see {teacher’s name}; and then we hang our bags on our hooks; we say hi to our friends; we find our seat...etcetera”.
- Involve your child in:
 - laying out their uniform so it is ready for the morning.
 - packing their bag – you might make a game out of this with younger children. A visual checklist can help your child remember what they need to take.
 - planning and packing their lunches and snacks.
- Try to have calm evenings and allow extra time to settle before bedtime if your child is feeling worried.
- Allow extra time to get ready for school in the morning so that you are not rushing.

After school

- Talk to your child about their day, including what they enjoyed, what may have worried them, and what they found difficult.
- Include some family time. Children may miss being at home with you during the day so it is important for them to feel close and connected with their family.

Available supports

If you feel that your child needs extra support at school, get in touch with your school to find out how to contact your Guidance Officer or other support staff.

Support is also available for children through Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800 or by visiting the [Kids Helpline website](#).

If you or your family are facing hardship during COVID-19, the department has published information about how to [access support](#) on their website.