

**Children of different ages have different needs related to information about COVID-19 and how to prevent and ease stress. Below, learn more about how to handle the current COVID-19 situation with your teenager.**

### Explaining COVID-19

- It's okay to talk about COVID-19 with your teen. Adolescents have likely heard about the virus through celebrities' social media accounts or news stories. It is important that caregivers give honest, but comforting information to their teens.
- COVID-19 is an illness that causes symptoms like the cold or flu. Most people, especially young healthy people, get better with rest and at-home treatment. Some people can get very ill and need treatment at the hospital. In some cases, COVID-19 can be fatal. But that is not the norm.
- While most of the severely ill are older people with existing health conditions, adolescents are not immune to COVID-19. There are cases of teens needing treatment.
- Teens need to take the guidelines for social distancing seriously to stay healthy.
- The most important role that teens play in their community is social distancing. Teens and young adults can have COVID-19 without any symptoms. If one teen who is carrying it hangs out with three friends and passes it to them, then those three friends could pass it on their grandparents or other vulnerable people. It is also important to wash hands frequently and wear masks in public to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

### Signs of Stress

- Teens often seem mature enough to handle adult conversations. However, they don't always have the coping skills for the stress of these topics. Limit how much news your teen sees if you find they're watching it frequently.
- A drastic change in your teen's personality, either becoming more reliant on others or withdrawing, is a sign of stress.
- Teens are enjoying a little more freedom now that they are doing virtual education. However, hours of singular focus on any activity, like video games or working out, could be a sign of stress.
- Look for changes in your teen's normal functioning, like irritability, over or under eating, being tired more than usual or insomnia, or sadness.
- It is developmentally appropriate for adolescents to rely on peers in times of stress. Your teen may not look to you for support. That's okay! Let them know you'll be there if they want to talk but don't force them to talk about their feelings

### Preventing and Easing Stress

- Make sure your teen knows that stress is totally normal right now. There's a lot of change and no one can control what's happening. Stress is to be expected.
- Your teens may have experienced some losses due to COVID-19 shut downs. Acknowledge that losing prom, graduation, school plays, athletic tournaments, birthdays, and holidays is hard. Hearing from a caregiver that it's okay to have feelings can help ease those feelings.
- Teens can responsibly use peers for stress relief via virtual avenues. Encourage your teens to be active participants in social relationships while social distancing.
- Keeping a schedule is helpful to prevent stress. Teens should keep their regular sleep schedule so they can complete school work during the day.
- Teens can do yoga, color mandalas, try deep breathing, or keep journals to process their stress.

#### References

Centers for Disease Control. [Symptoms of coronavirus](#).  
Mostafavi, B. [8 ways to help teens cope with social distancing blues](#). Michigan Health.

