**Supporting Mental Wellness and Family Life During COVID-19**

Since the pandemic began, almost everything about daily life looks different. Our experts are here to support your family as you cope, live and learn during COVID-19. We’ve pulled resources together in one place at seattlechildrens.org/copingandcovid. You’ll find ways to attend to your and your child’s mental wellness, tips for supporting learning in your home, videos on parenting teens during COVID-19 and recordings of our Facebook events that feature experts from Psychiatry, The Autism Center and Educational Services.

**Parenting is a source of joy that also requires a whole lot of work. That’s truer than ever now, as the COVID-19 pandemic wears on. Parents are taking on extra responsibilities, including more hands-on involvement with their kids’ schooling.**

During these stressful times, our own emotions may sometimes feel oversized. It’s no wonder we’re seeing changes in our kids’ emotions and behaviors. Parents and kids alike need to breathe deeply, practice self-care, hold on to our humor and optimism, and take things one day (and sometimes one moment!) at a time. As we strive to create peace and stability for our families, here are some guideposts to keep in mind.

**Be a role model.** Our kids watch us closely, and our actions speak volumes. Let them see you making smart, healthy choices relating to diet, exercise, screen time, hygiene and sleep. Be kind and respectful with your words and actions.

**Offer compassion and comfort.** Encourage your child to share all their feelings. In return, be an active, empathetic listener. Respond to their fears with consistent, reassuring messages. Give them lots of opportunities to be physically near you. If your child loves cuddling, offer plenty of it. Stay faithful to comforting routines that help you connect, like shared family meals and soothing bedtime rituals.

**Be generous with praise and positive attention.** Recommit to a positive, nurturing approach to parenting — including positive discipline techniques like setting clear expectations and rewarding desired behaviors. The link below has detailed information on the Seattle Children’s Positive Parenting program.

**Carve out time for play every day.** Whether it’s a family game night, a quick round of knock-knock jokes or an outdoor scavenger hunt, make time to play and laugh together. The simplest things have the power to delight — like building a cozy blanket fort or designing a fun hopscotch course with chalk.

**Take a break when you feel overwhelmed.** Treat yourself to a timeout when you need one. Take a quick walk, soak in a hot bath, sip a cup of tea or call a trusted friend for a heart-to-heart talk.

Consider that someday (hopefully soon!) the pandemic will be over. Yet for the rest of their lives, our kids will reflect back on this experience and know that they can always count on their families.

**TO LEARN MORE:** Visit seattlechildrens.org/positiveparenting.
Seasonal Flu Vaccines Are Extra Important this Year

Preventing the flu during the 2020-2021 influenza season will be more important than ever. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we all need to stay as healthy as possible and not overload our healthcare system. The flu vaccine reduces hospitalizations and deaths. Everyone 6 months and older should be vaccinated. Healthy children over 2 may get either a flu shot or a nasal-spray vaccine. Aim for you and your family to get the flu vaccine by the end of October.

If you have questions or doubts about vaccines, ask your child’s doctor. It’s always best to get health information from a medical professional.

TO LEARN MORE:

Encouraging Healthy Gender Development

On the day babies are born, they are assigned a sex. This concept refers to doctors observing physical characteristics and choosing male or female for the birth certificate. However, gender identity is much more complex. It describes how you express yourself and the way you feel on the inside. Upholding a child’s assigned sex without giving them space to explore their gender identity and express themselves can cause problems. Instead, parents and caregivers can intentionally encourage gender exploration, so that their children feel loved and supported and develop good self-esteem. Here are some ways that you can encourage healthy gender development:

Allow children to choose things, like clothing, toys and activities, for themselves. Giving them space to choose what they like supports healthy gender identity.

Be conscious of how you talk about gender. Avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes. Use gender-neutral language as much as possible.

Read and talk about gender with your child. There are many children’s books that explore diverse gender identities.

TO LEARN MORE:
Visit healthychildren.org and search ‘developing gender identity.’

Drop, Cover and Hold On!

Earthquakes have been rumbling all over in 2020. The Pacific Northwest is an earthquake-prone area, and experts warn that we are overdue for a big one. It’s essential to have a disaster supply kit ready and that you and your child know what to do when the earth starts to shake.

In most situations, the chances of injury are reduced if you DROP onto your hands and knees, COVER your head and neck with one arm and hand, and HOLD ON until the shaking stops. Being on hands and knees protects you from being knocked over and allows you to crawl to nearby shelter — like a sturdy table or desk — if it’s available. If you are under shelter, hold on to it with one hand and be ready to move with it if it shifts. If no shelter is available, crawl away from outside windows and hold on to your head and neck with both arms and hands.

If you are in bed, stay there and lie face down. Cover your head and neck with a pillow and keep your arms as close to your head as possible. Hold on to your head and neck with both hands until the shaking stops.

If you are outdoors, move to a clear area if you can safely do so — avoiding power lines, trees, signs, buildings and vehicles — then drop, cover and hold on. If you are driving, pull over to the side of the road, stop and set the parking brake. Stay inside the vehicle until the shaking stops.

The source below has more specific actions for other locations, plus details on preparing a disaster supply kit.

TO LEARN MORE:
Visit doh.wa.gov/emergencies.
Choosing Hand Sanitizer

COVID-19 has brought handwashing to the forefront of our minds. While washing hands with soap and water is the most effective way to reduce the spread of germs, they are not always readily available. Hand sanitizer is the next best option. Keep the following tips in mind when selecting a hand sanitizer to ensure that you are choosing a product that is safe and effective.

- Choose a hand sanitizer with 60 to 95% alcohol content.
- Avoid hand sanitizers that contain methanol.
- Be aware of hand sanitizers that make false or misleading claims. Avoid products that claim to protect against germs for extended periods of time.

To learn more:
Visit cdc.gov/handwashing/show-me-the-science-hand-sanitizer.html.

Get Moving!

When the pandemic closed schools and forced us to stay at home, many families understandably lost their focus on exercise. If your family needs to get back to healthy habits, take some simple steps to get your bodies moving again. It might start with taking a walk before the school day starts or as soon as it ends. Or try a new exercise routine — like yoga with online instruction or targeted workouts guided by a smartphone app. Older kids may enjoy a regular walking or running routine that gives them some time to themselves each day. And be sure to get outside as a family! You can shoot hoops in the driveway, enjoy a family bike ride or take the dog for a romp in the park.

To learn more:
Visit seattlechildrens.org/health-safety/keeping-kids-healthy/development/exercise.

Weighted Blankets Not Safe for Infants and Young Children

Weighted blankets have recently become widely available, claiming to provide a sounder sleep. As tempting as that promise sounds, weighted blankets should never be used with young children and certainly never with infants. For infants, a safe sleep environment is the three B’s: boring, bare and basic. To reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), infants must always be placed on their backs to sleep. Crib mattresses should be firm and fit tightly in the crib. Other than a snug fitted sheet, the crib should have no blankets, pillows, stuffed animals or other items. If your baby or child is having problems with sleep, talk with your doctor.

To learn more:
Visit youtube.com/watch?v=UWKS7jJaea4.

Quick Tip

In Washington state, it is the law for children to ride in a booster seat until they are 4 feet, 9 inches tall (57 inches). Most kids will need a booster seat until they are 10 to 12.
Classes and Events
As the COVID-19 situation changes, we continue to adjust or postpone our classes and events to follow public health recommendations. We now offer some classes online while some are on pause. Please check our website for the latest information. Scholarships are available. If you would like to ask about a scholarship, use the contact information for the class you're interested in to connect with the registrar.

PARENTING CLASSES

Autism 101
This free 90-minute lecture is designed to provide information and support to parents and families of children recently diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. A portion of each session is dedicated to answering questions from the attendees.

View dates and locations, sign up for live streaming or view a past lecture at seattlechildrens.org/autism101. Email Autism101@seattlechildrens.org if you have questions.

Autism 200 Series
Autism 200 is a series of free 90-minute classes for parents and caregivers of children with autism who wish to better understand autism spectrum disorder. Each class features a different topic. Classes are usually offered on the third Thursday of the month, 7 to 8:30 p.m., via live streaming.

View dates and topics, sign up for live streaming or view past Autism 200 lectures at seattlechildrens.org/autism200. Email Autism200@seattlechildrens.org if you have questions.

Babysafe
Babysafe is a 4-hour class for new and expectant parents and others who care for babies. Topics include infant development, baby safety, injury prevention and care of common injuries for infants from birth through 12 months of age. Infant CPR is demonstrated and practiced, but this is not a certification class.

This class is currently available virtually via Zoom. The fee is $85 and each registration is good for 2 people from the same family.

View dates at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-789-2306 if you have questions.

Dads of Daughters — A Parent Talk
Dads! There is nothing quite like being a dad of a daughter. Becoming more aware of what your preteen/teen daughter is experiencing physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively will give you tools to support and communicate more confidently. Julie Metzger, founder of Great Conversations, will share the latest research and parenting ideas.

This class will be facilitated online via Zoom on Wednesday, October 7 at 7 p.m. Register at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-789-2306 if you have questions.

Heartsaver First Aid, CPR and AED
This video-based class for parents and caregivers covers how to treat bleeding, sprains, broken bones, shock and other first-aid emergencies. Also includes infant, child and adult CPR and AED use. Students receive an American Heart Association Heartsaver First Aid, CPR, AED course completion card that is valid for 2 years.

This class is offered in Seattle. In-person classes are on pause at this time.

View dates and locations, sign up for live streaming or view a past lecture at seattlechildrens.org. Email Autism101@seattlechildrens.org if you have questions.

Mothers of Sons — A Parent Talk
A parent talk just for mothers of sons facilitated by Julie Metzger, founder of Great Conversations. This parent talk gives moms a unique opportunity to explore their relationship with their son while answering some of the questions around their son’s physical, emotional and social development.

This class will be facilitated online via Zoom on Thursday, October 8 at 7 p.m. Register at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-789-2306 if you have questions.

Youth Mental Health First Aid
This 8-hour class is for adults who regularly interact with adolescents ages 12 to 18. Youth Mental Health First Aid will improve your knowledge of mental health and substance use problems and will teach you how to connect youth with care when needed.

A virtual version of Youth Mental Health First Aid is now available for free. The date you register for is the date of the live instructor-led course.

View dates at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-987-9878 if you have questions.

CHILD, PRETEEN AND TEEN CLASSES

Better Babysitters
For youth, ages 11 to 14. Students learn about responsible babysitting, basic child development, infant and child care, safety, handling emergencies, age-appropriate toys, business tips and parent expectations.

This class is offered in Seattle, Bellevue, Everett, and Federal Way. In-person classes are on pause at this time.

Please check the website for the most current information at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-987-9878 if you have questions.

CPR and First Aid for Babysitters
For youth, ages 11 to 15. Topics include pediatric CPR, treatment for choking, and first-aid skills. Students receive an American Heart Association Heartsaver Pediatric First Aid, CPR, AED completion card, which is valid for 2 years.

This class is offered in Seattle. In-person classes are on pause at this time.

Please check the website for the most current information at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-987-9878 if you have questions.

The Chat
The Chat is a new online workshop series on puberty and sex that reflects the content from the in-person classes, For Boys and For Girls. Offered via Zoom, each 45-minute workshop is for preteens 10 to 12 years old, plus a parent or trusted adult.

You may take any individual workshop or all 5. If you register for all 5 events, we recommend starting with BO, Pimples and Hair — Oh My! and ending with Being Connected: Sex, Love and Everything In Between. While families can choose to attend any combination of workshops, the information in earlier sessions provides a foundation for understanding later session.

The Chat workshop titles are: BO, Pimples and Hair — Oh My!; Girl Bodies and Beyond; Boy Bodies and Beyond; Being Together: Feelings, Friendships and Families; and Being Connected: Sex, Love and Everything In Between. The cost is $25 per workshop or the series of 5 for $100.

View dates at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-789-2306 if you have questions. See a trailer for The Chat at greatconversations.com.

EVENTS

Free Virtual Car Seat Checks
King County Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians are offering free virtual car seat check appointments via video chat platforms. For more information, email Laura Miccile at laura.miccile@kingcounty.gov or call 206-477-8664.

South County Fire and Safe Kids Snohomish County are offering free virtual car seat classes. Registration is required. Visit southsnofire.org or call 206-477-8664.

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