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COVID-19 Fact Sheet for Grandfamilies and Multigenerational Families

Our country and the world are facing a pandemic unlike any of us have seen before. People over the age of 60 and those with compromised immune systems are among the highest-risk populations COVID-19 is impacting. While grandparents are being advised to isolate themselves physically from grandchildren, it is nearly impossible for older caregivers to distance themselves from the children they are raising. You are on the front line for your family every day. Today's challenges are making it much tougher to care for them. It's important to stay calm and do everything you can to stay healthy, informed and connected. Here are a few suggestions.

Finding Factual, Up to Date Information

Center for Disease Control (CDC): The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has up to date, accurate information and recommendations about COVID-19.

- **General Information:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- **Frequently Asked Questions COVID-19 and Children:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/children-faq.html>
- **Older Adults and Medical Conditions:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>
- **CDC Guidance for Workplace, School, and Home:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/workplace-school-and-home-guidance.pdf>

World Health Organization (WHO): Useful information can be accessed at <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

County Health Department: Contact your state's <https://www.naccho.org/membership/lhd-directory> to learn more about your state's response and recommendations.

Kinship Navigators and Other Grandfamilies Support Programs: For information specifically to help grandfamilies, contact your local kinship navigator or other grandfamilies support programs. Visit www.grandfamilies.org for a list of local programs in your state.

Area Agency on Aging: For information to help older caregivers contact your area agency on aging. You can find them through the eldercare locator at 1-800-677-1116 or visit eldercare.acl.gov

Practicing Excellent Hygiene

Wash Hands Regularly and Thoroughly: Wash your hands regularly and ask the children in your house to do the same especially after sneezing, coughing or being in a public place. To make sure the family is washing hands thoroughly, you can practice washing together and teach each other a 20-second song. Children are taught the correct length of time to wash their hands, using hard to forget songs like Baby Shark and Happy Birthday. Your generation has music that can help pass the time too, whether it's the beginning of Blue Suede Shoes or Splish Splash I Was Taking a Bath, sing together and share a smile.

Avoid Touching Face: Avoid touching your own eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands. Remind children of the same. For school-age children, you can make this into a game. For younger children, do your best to have them wash hands regularly after play and before and after eating.

Clean and Disinfect Daily: Focus your daily cleaning and disinfecting on high-touch surfaces in common areas in your home such as tables, hard-backed chairs, doorknobs, light switches, remotes, handles, desks, toilets, and sinks. For small children focus on their most popular toys. For older children, remind them to regularly wipe down their phones, devices and computer keyboards.

The **American Academy of Pediatrics** has more information on children and Coronavirus at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/2019-Novel-Coronavirus.aspx>

Accessing Food and Medication

Schools and Childcare Centers: Schools and childcare centers are working on solutions to ensure children get access to the food they need. While some areas are focused on helping children who usually get free breakfast and lunch at school, many schools are making food available to any child in their school that needs it. In some cases, schools are delivering food with school buses or offering to make it available at the school or other community-based locations for people to drive by and pick it up. Find out what your school's plans are and how you can access it for your children and, in some cases, for you too.

Food for Older Caregivers: If you or someone in your household receive Meals on Wheels or other home-delivered meals, ask if because of the exceptional circumstances, they can also deliver meals for your children. You can also contact your eldercare locator eldercare.acl.gov to find out about other sources of food for older adults.

Medications: Check with your pharmacy and ask if they will deliver your prescriptions to your home. If you cannot get your medications delivered, ask for help from neighbors, friends, houses of worship, or a local community-based program. Make sure you have basic first aid and up to date medication on hand for you and the children.

Accessing Technology

Access to the internet is important for getting current up to date information about the Coronavirus and available resources and supports. It is also important for many students who will be doing homework at home and/or distance learning projects and for older adults to stay connected. You may want to ask a trusted friend or family member with internet access to help you get signed up.

Free or Discounted Internet Access: Comcast is offering 60 days of free internet access and Spectrum offers discounted internet access. Other internet providers may be offering this as well. Check with the companies that serve your community. With any service, be sure to terminate after 60 days so you aren't charged for service beyond the free period. Find out more <https://corporate.comcast.com/covid-19?linkId=84300755> or call 1-855-8-INTERNET (1-855-846-8376) to confirm eligibility and apply. To learn if you qualify for Spectrum's discounted internet visit <https://www.spectrum.com/browse/content/spectrum-internet-assist.html> or you can call 1-844-525-1574 to start the qualification process.

Internet for Students: This article highlights internet options for accessing the internet for students on a low income: <https://www.reviews.com/blog/internet-options-for-students-on-low-income/>

Staying Connected

Staying home doesn't mean you need to disconnect from friends, family, and other supports. If you are part of a grandparent support group, consider moving your meetings to conference calls or through technologies such as google hangout. If it's not possible to connect the group, make individual calls to members to check in on each other. If there are other children and teens those in your care connect with during the regular meeting, encourage them to connect through technology. For more ideas check out Generations United's blog <https://buff.ly/3aJN2z8>

Talking with Kids about Coronavirus

Children need your reassurance. They also need factual, age-appropriate information. To help with the messages to share with the children you are caring for, check out these resources:

- **Child Mind: Talking to Kids About the Coronavirus:**
<https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>
- **Just for Kids, A Comic Exploring the new Coronavirus from National Public Radio:**
<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus%C2%A0>
- **Answering Your Child's Questions During the Coronavirus from ZERO TO THREE:**
 - <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3265-answering-your-young-child-s-questions-about-coronavirus>
 - <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3211-why-are-people-wearing-masks-why-are-people-covering-their-faces>

- **National Association of School Psychologists:** Comprehensive resource for talking to children about COVID-19 is available at [www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-COVID-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-COVID-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource)
- **Multilingual Coloring Book for Explaining Coronavirus:** This short book is available in 11 languages and offers a place for children to express their feelings about the coronavirus and how it affects their families. It explains what the virus is and how children can help stop its spread. Download a copy at <https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>
- **Generations United’s Vaccination Discussion Guide for Families** has helpful information and strategies for family conversations. It can be found at <https://bandageofhonor.org/home/resources-2/intergenerational-discussion-guide/>

Managing Anxiety and Stress/Self Care

With school closures, older adults staying inside, and many workplaces requiring work from home, grandfamilies are juggling children at home while managing other responsibilities. Combined with other concerns related to the virus, grandfamilies need to have tools to manage anxiety and stress in the household. Here are a few resources:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/11/well/family/coronavirus-teenagers-anxiety.html>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/13/the-family-lockdown-guide-how-to-emotionally-prepare-for-coronavirus-quarantine>
- <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3210-tips-for-families-coronavirus>

Resources and Activities for Children at Home

- <https://extension.wsu.edu/king/4-h/learning-links-4-h-and-more/>
- <http://www.amazingeducationalresources.com/>
- Caribu is offering 60 days free access to the online games and activities available to families <https://caribu.com/>

Back-Up Planning

Grandfamilies may have what is known as a “Secondary Permanency Plan” that outlines who can help take care of the children in case they are no longer able to do so. Review your plan or create one reaching out to close friends and relatives that could step in if you should get sick. Reassure the children they will be taken care of until you can do so again.

Conclusion

Information about COVID-19 and resources are changing rapidly. We at Generations United will do all we can to update this fact sheet and provide new resources as they become available. If you have hints or resources to share, please let us know by contacting gu@gu.org.

In the meantime, please remember it is important to be calm and do everything you can to stay healthy, informed, and connected. The children in your care need you. They look to you for comfort and to protect them. You can only do this if you take care of yourself and lean on others who can provide the support, resources, and services you need to do what you do best—care for your family.