

TEENS & COVID-19



Educate teens about staying safe and healthy

As we all begin to safely interact outside our home it is important to help teens understand what social distancing means and when to wear face coverings. Talking about how to safely interact helps to prepare them to handle situations they may encounter with friends and peers. Teens, by nature, are less risk avoidant than adults and thus less likely to follow protective actions like mask wearing and social distancing. They're also less likely to pay attention to negative information and more likely to be influenced by peer pressure. As a result, they may not wear masks due to the fear of being "uncool".

Follow these steps to have productive conversations with your teen:

- 1** Find a space and time to talk, free from distractions.
- 2** Actively listen to your teen's viewpoint and show that their voice counts. Ask what they know, how they feel about wearing masks and other COVID-19 measures, and where they get information. Ask questions and listen to responses before giving your viewpoint. Consider if their thoughts and actions are impacted by peer pressure.
- 3** Provide factual information without exaggerated detail that attempts to generate fear to help the teenager listen. Teenagers are not likely to respond to scare tactics. Accurate information can counteract what they see on social media.
- 4** Encourage them to consider the impact of their actions. Ask about someone they know who is immunocompromised and how their actions could impact that person's health. Teenagers respond well to encouragements of altruistic behavior.

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HAS TO GO
THROUGH
THIS ALONE.**

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Michigan
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Keep an eye on mental health

For many, this can be a stressful and challenging time. There may not be as many resources available that you would normally use. Help and encourage your child to reach out to family, friends, and other supports who can provide space to talk. If you don't have anyone to talk with, you can also **text RESTORE to 741741** to reach the Crisis Text Line and chat with a trained professional who is ready to help.

Prioritize rest and exercise

Teens who do not get enough sleep and exercise are at greater risk for health and behavior problems. Learn about how much [sleep](#) your teen needs and what amount of daily [exercise](#) is appropriate based on their age.

Help teens stay focused and busy

One way to help teens is to focus on what is going well. Suggest keeping a gratitude journal or identifying positive things in life right now. Encourage trying new things like a hobby or going on a virtual national park tour to keep teens busy. Finding ways to stay healthy are also beneficial, consider family walks or virtual exercise classes.

Provide an opportunity to contribute to how the family and household runs. Provide a variety of ways, based on their age and ability, so they have a choice in how they contribute. This could include household chores, assisting with meals, or helping a sibling learn something new.

Encourage breaks from the media

Information from the media is changing daily, sometimes even hourly. It can be overwhelming, and is not always accurate. For those who have mental health challenges, it may feel even more overwhelming. Focusing on other things can be helpful. Encourage children and teens to go for a walk outside, create art, listen to music, watch a zoo cam, or read a book. Focusing on something other than the media can be helpful for you, too.

Implement a schedule

Structure helps teens know what to expect. One way to create structure is to make a schedule but allow flexibility. A schedule can include when to go to sleep and wake up, meal times, time for learning, entertainment, independent time and chores. Always inform teens of major updates to the schedule as things change.



Model healthy behavior

Remember, teens are more likely to follow COVID-19 guidelines if you are as well.

Build their skills to socialize safely

COVID-19 restrictions can cause a blow to the social life of teens. When it is safe, social pods can be used as a deliberate strategy to minimize viral spread while fostering social connectedness for teens. Social pods consist of a small number of friends who communicate openly about their exposure and risk of infection so that social interactions can happen safely. Be sure to follow the [social pod guidelines](#) when helping teens form safe social pods.

Resources

For Families

- Michigan.gov/StayWell
- [Family Well-Being Guide](#)
- [Coping with Stress as a Family](#)
- [Coping with Grief and Loss](#)
- [Move Your Way](#)
- [Child Mind Institute](#)

For Teens

- [Supporting Teens and Young Adults](#)
- [Addressing Challenges Teens Experience during and beyond COVID-19](#)
- [Supporting Adult Children Returning Home with Substance Use Disorders](#)
- [Supporting LGBTQ Youth and Young Adults](#)

From the CDC

- [COVID-19 in Children and Teens](#)
- [Support for Teens and Young Adults](#)

Family Activities

- [Action for Happiness](#)
Download monthly calendars and activities.
- [Kennedy Krieger Institute](#)
Daily activities for families.

Mindfulness

- Headspace.com/MI
Mindfulness and meditation for Michiganders.
- [Mindfulness and Stress Resilience Activities](#)
- GoNoodle.com
Movement and mindfulness videos.

Parks & Zoos

- [Virtual National Park Tours](#)
- [San Diego Zoo - Live Cam](#)

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