FACT SHEET FOR FAMILIES

New coronavirus: Recommendations for families with children

1. Do we have to keep our children at home to prevent any risk of infection?

We have to stop the further spread of the new coronavirus. The Federal Council is therefore calling on us all to stay at home now.

Nevertheless, children have a lot of energy that they need to get out of their systems and they should have the opportunity to do so. Staying active strengthens the body, puts you in a better mood, can reduce stress and anxiety and boosts the immune system. If children play together, they should do so in small groups of no more than five, and the same children should play together. It would also be sensible if they were to stay close to home. It is important that they follow the rules on hygiene and social distancing (by washing their hands and keeping their distance), and that parents or other adults don’t meet up too. For their own protection, older people and others at especially high risk should not have contact with children.

Use the space available to you at home. Do you have a garden? Then why not try playing badminton or table tennis. Or maybe juggling – that’s something you can also do indoors. Push the furniture to one side to make space. Set up a corner with cushions and mattresses to jump around on, or set up an obstacle course. You also can train your endurance, strength, balance and agility at home.

You will find links to online offerings to help you stay active on the FOPH website: https://www.bag.admin.ch/new-coronavirus > Recommendations for everyday life

2. How can we cope with spending so much time at home?

The coronavirus epidemic presents us all with new and unusual challenges. Many people are unsettled, missing social contact and may have financial worries. Families are spending more time at home and living in a confined space. This can lead to stress and conflict. In these challenging times, it is especially important to look after yourself and discuss problems.

Various specialist agencies and counselling services are available to help if you have concerns. Do not hesitate to seek help and support. Here is a selection of possible sources of help:

- Your school’s social support service is there to help and glad to assist.
- You can find a host of tips and points of contact for questions on everyday matters and on mental health at www.dureschnufe.ch (dureschnufe.ch; santépsy.ch, salutepsi.ch).
3. How should I go about talking to my kids about the coronavirus?

Children have a good many questions about the new coronavirus. Take the questions seriously and try to answer them in an age-appropriate way. Children should have an understanding of what is going on, why it is such a special situation, and why certain measures have had to be taken. Try to explain these things in a way that your child can understand and don’t withhold any information. On the other hand, make sure conversations don’t only revolve around the current crisis. Carry on talking about all the other things your children care about. They are equally important.

The current situation and the associated uncertainties can trigger feelings of fear and anxiety. Show understanding if your child needs more attention than usual and respond to their need for closeness and security.

Older children in particular often struggle to cope with the new situation. They can have great difficulty dealing with isolation; they miss their friends, and spending so much time with parents can often lead to arguments. They may spend more time on social media to stay in touch with friends, chat and share their experiences. This can help them to get through this difficult period.

Try to help your children relieve stress and stay calm. Seek help if you need to, and tell your child about available support channels, such as the Dargebotene Hand. An outside perspective can often help alleviate concerns.

4. What is the risk of children becoming infected with the new coronavirus? What is the risk for children with underlying medical conditions?

It is not yet possible to say with certainty just how susceptible children are to becoming infected with the new coronavirus. As far as we know, children are less likely to contract the new coronavirus than adults, although the symptoms are often the same. The symptoms tend to remain mild though with some children displaying no symptoms at all. Those children that do fall ill are far less likely to become seriously ill than adults or older people. Nevertheless, serious cases in children cannot be entirely excluded.

The new coronavirus is easily transmitted through close contact. As children are often in close contact with other children, and as they often show no symptoms or only mild symptoms, it is likely that they can transmit the virus to other people.

Experts do not yet know a great deal about the risk posed by the new coronavirus to children with underlying medical conditions. However, children with underlying medical conditions are probably likely to be at higher risk of becoming seriously ill if they become infected with the
new coronavirus. They should therefore be protected from infection just like other high-risk groups. Call a doctor immediately if symptoms occur.

5. How should sick children be cared for, and what happens if the parents develop symptoms?

If you as a parent begin to display symptoms, you must isolate yourself at home for at least ten days so as not to infect others. You should also seek to prevent transmitting the virus within your family. You can come out of isolation once you have been free of symptoms for 48 hours, provided ten days have passed since the first symptoms appeared.

→ Read and follow closely the instructions on self-isolation on the FOPH website: www.bag.admin.ch/new-coronavirus > Self-isolation and self-quarantine

If your child shows symptoms of illness and is in isolation, it is a good idea to appoint one person in the household to look after the child. It is generally recommended that the whole family remain in quarantine, particularly in families with several children. Appropriate solutions may have to be found depending on the age of the child and the situation in the home.

→ Read and follow closely the instructions on self-quarantine on the FOPH website: www.bag.admin.ch/new-coronavirus > Self-isolation and self-quarantine