



Public Site

In the current context of Covid-19, you may have questions about how and when to connect your child/teen to further support if you have concerns about their mental health. It is expected that many your children/teens and adults will be struggling more than usual at this time, and this document is intended to give some general guidance.

What we can expect to be typical for many children/teens at this time:

- They may be struggling with some sadness, worry, confusion, or grief about things they can no longer do. These feelings might be more intense and/or more frequent than usual.
- They may be worrying about the elderly or high-risk friends and family members.
- They may be having trouble sleeping sometimes due to worry, but they are still able to get up and go about their day.
- They may feel bored and/or lonely, missing their friends.
- They may have a hard time concentrating and getting started with work.
- They may make less of an effort on their appearance, may wear pj's all day, etc.
- They may have emotional up's and down's, may cry more often and may show more misbehavior or anger/defiance/irritability.
- They may seek out extra reassurance, hugs, and comfort from parents.

These can be **normal** responses to the current situation and may not require professional help.

Encourage your child teen to:

- Acknowledge & accept their feelings.
- Connect with supports – family, friends and community resources that they are linked with.
- Maintain a daily routine that includes getting up and going to bed at regular times, as well as showering and getting dressed even if they aren't going out, etc.
- Regularly connecting with friends/family via a platform like skype, text, phone, etc.
- Consider if social media and/or the news is having a negative impact on their mental health. Some individuals might benefit from limiting their time on social media and news platforms to a certain time of day and/or a reasonable length of time.
- Daily exercise and getting fresh air.
- Daily calming activities (i.e. deep breathing, mindfulness, gratitude journaling)
- Try a new hobby, or explore using art, music, or dance as an outlet
- Focus on the things that are within their control that can keep them safer today – **staying at home** unless absolutely necessary to leave and **washing their hands**



thoroughly and any other directives from Public Health. Remember that even if they do get ill, **most people recover** from Covid-19.

- Explore mental health information/resources:
 - WCDSB Mental Health and Wellness page <https://www.wcdsb.ca/programs-and-services/mental-health-and-well-being-at-wcdsb/>
 - School Mental Health Ontario Covid page <https://smho-smso.ca/blog/how-to-support-your-child-mental-health-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>
 - Covid-19 Youth mental Health Resource hub <https://jack.org/COVID>
 - Kids Help Phone for support at 1(800) 668-6868 or text 'CONNECT' to 686868 or visit <https://kidshelpphone.ca/>
- **If in doubt, reach out for support.**

Most mental health services children/teens are continuing their services, in a different format. For additional Waterloo Region mental health support families can contact:

- Front Door at 519-749-2932 for child and adolescent mental health services or www.frontdoormentalhealth.com
- Here 24/7 at 1(844) 437-3247 in the event of a mental health crisis.

Please note: Children/teens who have a past history of mental health difficulties may find some of these difficulties resurfacing. They may benefit from a 'booster session' from their current/past counselor, if available.

Signs that further assessment/consultation from a mental health professional is strongly recommended:

- Your child is hypervigilant with the news/consuming a lot of covid-related news, it's taking up a lot of time, **and** leaving them highly distressed, panicked, or upset and unable to go about their daily routine.
- Your child is distressed about germs, cannot stop thinking about them, and/or is spending so much time washing their hands that they are raw and damaged, especially if this is disproportionate to their risks.
- Emerging pattern that your child is withdrawn, won't leave their room, won't engage with family, has appetite changes (too little or too much), has changes in sleeping patterns (too little or too much), significantly deteriorating hygiene, feelings of hopelessness/helplessness.
- Your child/teen makes comments about self-harming or wanting to die by suicide. In this situation it is very important to **immediately** consult with Here 24/7 for recommended next steps. If it is a medical emergency contact 911.



This is not an exhaustive list -- if you have concerns it is important to reach out to your family doctor and/or contact the appropriate mental health supports listed above for recommended next steps.

