

# WHAT IS COVID-19?

## AND HOW DOES IT RELATE TO CHILD DEVELOPMENT?

Doctors first discovered coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) at the end of 2019. It is an illness related to the lungs. It's caused by a virus that can spread quickly from person to person and can be picked up from surfaces. In some people, it can be severe, leading to pneumonia or even death. Since COVID-19 is new, there is no cure or vaccine for it at this time.

Source: [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov)

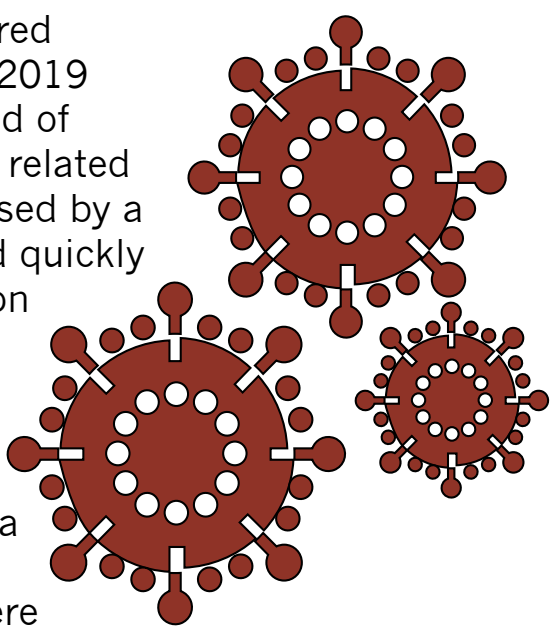
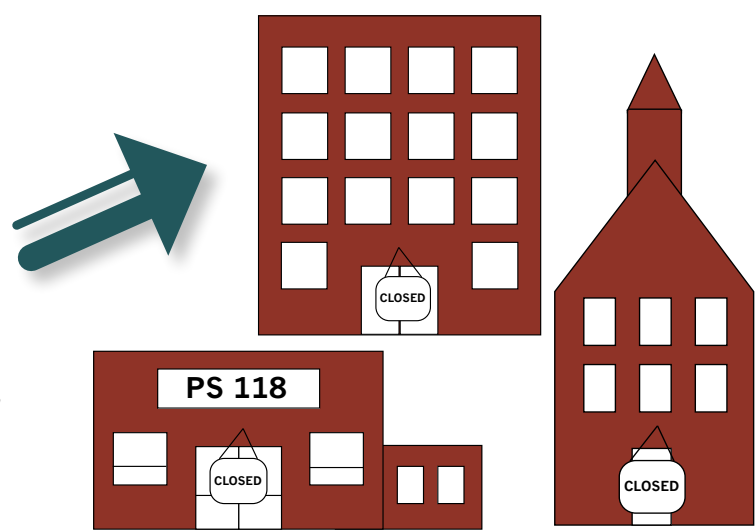


Illustration of coronavirus, magnified



Because the virus spreads so quickly, many places have banned large groups of people. Schools, houses of worship, and workplaces are closed.

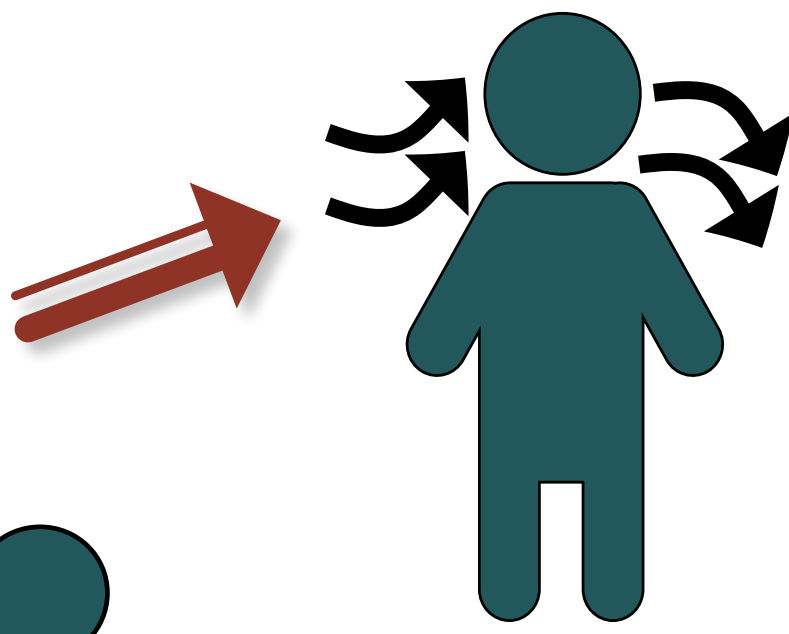
Children can't go to school or daycare. Families may lose pay because adults can't go to work. These changes can be very stressful. That's why it's important to learn how stress can affect us. We can also learn what we can do about it.

## PROTECTING AGAINST INFECTION AND TOXIC STRESS

Losing a job would be stressful normally. So would having to homeschool at the drop of a hat. But these things are even more stressful when there's a dangerous virus in the world. It's important for all of us to stay away from others *physically*. This will help keep the virus from spreading in our communities. But it's also very important to stay connected to people we care about. This is true for children *and* adults.



Video chatting with a friend or loved one is a good example. Or saying 'hello' to a neighbor who's more than six feet away. These connections can make the stress feel easier to bear.



Taking a minute to close your eyes and breathe in and out can also help. That's because slow breathing tells your body's stress system to ease up a bit. This can help you respond better at even the most difficult times.

When we as adults feel better, it can help us connect better with the children we care for. This connection can help protect all of us, adults *and* kids, from the effects of stress. It also supports kids' healthy growth.



## SUPPORTING FAMILIES THROUGH THE CRISIS, AND BEYOND

A worldwide virus is a stressful time for everyone. But the stress gets worse for those who were already dealing with things like poverty, racism, or violence. There are still resources that can help in these challenging times: crisis hotlines, food banks, and relief funds. There is no shame in seeking help if you need it.



We all want to build up the long-term wellbeing of children and families in our communities. That's why we as a society need to support responsive caregiving everywhere. This includes caregiving in homes, schools, and childcare centers. Together, this will allow us to weather whatever storms we come up against, now or in the future.