

To: Teachers
Object: Facing COVID – 19: Age-specific health education
Source: www.who.int

COVID-19 is a new virus and we are still learning about how it affects children. We know it is possible for people of any age to be infected with the virus, but so far, according to international health bodies, there have been relatively few cases of COVID-19 reported among children. The virus can be fatal in cases, so far mainly among older people with pre-existing medical conditions.

Below are suggestions on how to engage students of different ages on preventing and controlling the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses. Activities should be contextualized further based on the specific needs of children (language, ability, gender, etc.) and can be adopted across subjects.

Preschool

- Focus on good health behaviors, such as covering coughs and sneezes with the elbow and washing hands frequently
- Sing a song while washing hands to practice the recommended 20 second duration.
 - Children can “practice” washing their hands with hand sanitizer
- Develop a way to track hand washing and reward for frequent/timely hand washing
- Use puppets or dolls to demonstrate symptoms (sneezing, coughing, fever) and what to do if they feel sick (i.e. their head hurts, their stomach hurts, they feel hot or extra tired) and how to comfort someone who is sick (cultivating empathy and safe caring behaviors)
- Have children sit further apart from one another, have them practice stretching their arms out or ‘flap their wings’, they should keep enough space to not touch their friends.

Primary School: Grade 1 to Grade 5

- Make sure to listen to children’s concerns and answer their questions in an age-appropriate manner; don’t overwhelm them with too much information. Encourage them to express and communicate their feelings. Discuss the different reactions they may experience and explain that these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation.
- Emphasize that children can do a lot to keep themselves and others safe.
 - Introduce the concept of social distancing (standing further away from friends, avoiding large crowds, not touching people if you don’t need to, etc.)
 - Focus on good health behaviors, such as covering coughs and sneezes with the elbow and washing hands

- Help children understand the basic concepts of disease prevention and control. Use exercises that demonstrate how germs can spread. For example, by putting colored water in a spray bottle and spraying over a piece of white paper. Observe how far the droplets travel.
- Demonstrate why it is important to wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water
 - Put a small amount of glitter in students' hands and have them wash them with just water, notice how much glitter remains, then have them wash for 20 seconds with soap and water
- Have students analyze texts to identify high risk behaviors and suggest modifying behaviors
 - For example, a teacher comes to school with a cold. He sneezes and covers it with his hand. He shakes hands with a colleague. He wipes his hands after with a handkerchief then goes to class to teach. What did the teacher do that was risky? What should he have done instead?

KJS Year 1 to KJS Year 4

- Make sure to listen to students' concerns and answer their questions.
- Emphasize that students can do a lot to keep themselves and others safe.
 - Introduce the concept of social distancing
 - Focus on good health behaviors, such as covering coughs and sneezes with the elbow and washing hands
 - Remind students that they can model healthy behaviors for their families
- Encourage students to prevent and address stigma
 - Discuss the different reactions they may experience and explain these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. Encourage them to express and communicate their feelings
- Build students' agency and have them promote facts about public health.
 - Have students make their own Public Service Announcements through school announcements and posters
- Incorporate relevant health education into other subjects
 - Science and Health & Safety can cover the study of viruses, disease transmission and the importance of vaccinations
 - Social studies can focus on the history of pandemics and evolution of policies on public health and safety
 - Media literacy and language lessons can empower students to be critical thinkers and makers, effective communicators and active citizens