

# SUPPORT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY DURING COVID 19

We all experience stress and feelings of anxiety in challenging times, but now we may feel overwhelmed by a number of simultaneous stressors - isolation, financial and employment uncertainty, kids home from school and getting cabin fever – all things that are beyond our control during this pandemic. It is important for parents to be aware they could be using substances as a way of coping with stress, and their kids may think substance use is an appropriate way to deal with uncomfortable feelings. Right now, it's more important than ever for you and your family to find ways to stay well, stay calm and stay mentally healthy.

**Find positive perspectives and healthy coping strategies to support yourself and your family through the challenges of COVID 19 at [drugfreekids.org](https://drugfreekids.org)**

## PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR KEEPING KIDS SAFE

School closures during the pandemic mean families are spending most of their time together. You might be concerned that your kids are more exposed, or have increased access to substances within your home. It's important to implement safe storage practices for alcohol, cannabis and prescription medications, and to have informed conversations with your kids about the health effects of substance use.

**Find out how at [drugfreekids.org](https://drugfreekids.org)**



## ALCOHOL

The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction reports that 25% of Canadians (aged 35-54) say their alcohol consumption has increased during the pandemic. Do you think your own consumption has increased? Do your kids think it's okay to drink when they're stressed? It's important to know that excessive use of alcohol and cannabis can weaken your immune system, making you even more susceptible to COVID-19.

**Model a healthy approach to alcohol and get to know the low-risk alcohol use guidelines. Find out how at [drugfreekids.org](https://drugfreekids.org)**

## PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

1 in 10 high school students report using painkillers that weren't prescribed to them and the majority of those get them from home. Store your prescription and over the counter medications like cough syrup in a secure location.

**Take any drugs that are expired or unused back to the pharmacy when it's safe to do so. Find out more at [drugfreekids.org](https://drugfreekids.org)**



## CANNABIS

Cannabis smoke contains toxins, carcinogens and irritants that are known to have negative effects on lung health. Regular use can cause coughing, wheezing and tightness in the chest. Smoking cannabis can also suppress the immune system, making a person more susceptible to infection. Smoking or vaping cannabis can worsen the respiratory symptoms of the disease – it will not prevent, alleviate or treat Covid-19 symptoms.<sup>1</sup>

**The Cannabis Talk Kit has information and practical tools to help you talk with your kids. Order your free printed copy at [drugfreekids.org](https://drugfreekids.org)**

## VAPING

*"While COVID-19 is less likely to cause serious symptoms in younger people, in combination with substance use like vaping or smoking cigarettes or cannabis, it could pose a serious health threat."* (Dr. N. Chadi & Dr. R. Bélanger, Canadian Paediatric Society)

Vaping and smoking cigarettes and cannabis can weaken the lung's regular defenses and affect a person's cardiovascular health. Young people who smoke or vape may be more likely to develop acute respiratory complications from coronavirus, which could result in hospitalization and/or treatment in an intensive care unit.

**Now is the perfect time to talk with your kids about vaping or smoking. Our Youth and Vaping resource can help, visit [drugfreekids.org](https://drugfreekids.org)**

## STREET DRUGS

We already know about the harmful effects of street drugs, and the risk that they may contain fentanyl or other dangerous additives. It's important to know that fentanyl and other opioids can slow breathing rate, and in combination with the acute respiratory complications associated with COVID-19, may increase the risk of overdose and death.<sup>2</sup>

**If your child is using opioids problematically, keep Naloxone on hand and be sure to know the signs of an opioid overdose. Our Let's Talk Opioids resource can help at [drugfreekids.org](https://drugfreekids.org)**

1 COVID-19 and Cannabis Smoking and Vaping: Four Things You Should Know. CCSA, 2020  
2 Nora D. Volkow, MD, Collision of the COVID-19 and Addiction Epidemics, 2020

## TALKING WITH YOUR KIDS ABOUT SUBSTANCE USE DURING COVID-19

There is no better time than now. You may not have all the answers but it's still important to acknowledge any feelings of stress and anxiety your child may have and talk about them.

- Always come from a place of love, even if the talk gets tough.
- Be honest.
- Be hopeful.
- Make it age-appropriate.
- Model healthy approaches to help them cope
- Focus on family time.

**We can help you begin at [drugfreekids.org](https://drugfreekids.org)**

**EDUCATE. EMPOWER. ENGAGE.**

**DFK educates parents about youth substance use, empowers with evidence based information and practical tools and engages parents to have frequent and open conversations with their kids.**