In the last month, the COVID-19 pandemic has turned the world upside down and dramatically changed each and every one of our lives. We are all trying to find our way through this new reality the best way we can, using whatever we have available that might help. The good news is that we don’t have to do it alone. Now more than ever is the time to turn to our communities, to lean on one another, and ask for help. We really are “all in this together.”

In our program, we are very lucky to have a team of experts that we can turn to for advice. In this edition of the e-Newsletter we asked our team to share their wisdom in the areas of mental health, nutrition and activity that will help us get through this difficult time and give us the best chance of being healthy, safe and perhaps even wiser when this COVID pandemic is behind us. With that in mind, I thought I would start by sharing some techniques that I am finding helpful at this time:

Take it one day at a time. The best advice I have been given is to stay focused on what I am doing today, and to be mindful of the present. It is when we start to look too far into the future that the fear and anxiety start to creep into our minds and we start to feel overwhelmed.

Focus on things that you can control. A lot of the events in the world right now are out of our control, and that is a very unsettling feeling for many. Remind yourself to focus on the things that we can control such as keeping a regular sleep schedule, being mindful of what we eat and drink, making sure we still do activity every day, washing our hands, and connecting with friends/family virtually. If we do these things, we will start feeling more in control and balanced.

Find things to be grateful for. Even though there are a lot of bad things happening right now and the news can be bleak, it is still important to find things that we are grateful for — our healthcare system, clean water, nice weather, family, friends and pets, to name only a very few. Research has shown that if we spend time each day thinking of what we are grateful for, it can make us happier people — something we could all use a little more of at this time.

Whether it is staying in the moment, focusing on those things we have control over, or finding something to be grateful for, I hope that you will find some peace for yourself and your family at this time.

Talking to Children about COVID-19
Dr. Sarah Schmidt, Psychologist, BCCH - Shapedown BC
(adapted from Dr. Stanford, BCCH)

A lot is happening quickly in relation to COVID-19. It’s normal to feel worried and overwhelmed. Children may feel worried and overwhelmed too. Here are some ways to help:

Talk to your kids about COVID-19 and how they are feeling about it.

* Start the conversation. Let your child know that they can talk to you about COVID-19.
* Find out what they understand. Show that you care and understand, and normalize their feelings (“It makes sense that you are worried about COVID-19” or “I am sad that we can’t go on our trip”).
* Be ready with information and answers that are true, appropriate for your child’s age, and consistent. If you don’t know the answer, it’s OK to say you don’t know. You can always ask others and then answer the question later.
* Be ready to talk about what COVID-19 is (“COVID-19 is a new kind of...” Continued on page 2

Healthy Bites
By Rachael Heer-Bola, Dietitian, Fraser Health (Punjabi) - Shapedown BC

Meal planning and grocery shopping may bring up mixed emotions and worries during this time. What foods should we buy? Are fresh fruits and vegetables safe to eat? How do we stay safe while grocery shopping? Here are some of our tips for keep your family nourished during this time.

Take stock of what you already have at home, and then create a meal plan. Continued on page 5
**COVID-19 continued from page 1**

virus. It can also be called coronavirus. Viruses can make people sick. COVID-19 makes most people only a little bit sick, but can make a very small group of people really sick. That’s why everyone is working hard to take care of it.

* Be ready to explain things like social or physical distancing (“Physical distancing means that we try to keep a space between people if we go out. We are careful about crowds and what we touch”).

* If your child asks lots of questions, or the same question over and over, this could be a sign of anxiety. Answering the same question again and again can actually serve to raise, or maintain their anxiety over time. If this happens, try saying something that acknowledges the anxiety (“You’ve asked me that before; you’re really worried. It is stressful. Can you remind me what I said last time when you asked that question?”)

* Point out people who are helping, and plan a way to help others with your child. Practice gratitude for what you have and what you can do. Focus on the positive.

* Monitor and restrict your child’s access to media about COVID-19.

* Just like for adults, constant information can feel overwhelming and add to stress.

* Checking the media once a day around your child may be enough.

* Be with your child when they are accessing the media.

* If you are looking for information, visit the BC Centre for Disease Control site.

* Maintain a family day that has structure and a sense of “normal.”

* Plan activities, meals, quiet time, and sleep.

* Do fun things that you might not usually have time to do (see page 3).

* Make sure that you are managing your child’s screen-time, but maintain some social connections, even if this can only be done virtually.

**Expect changes in behaviour; be patient and keep parenting.**

* When we are stressed, it often comes out in our behaviour. What this looks like for kids depends on the child (their age, level of stress, temperament, etc).

* Some common behaviour changes might be: clingingness, getting upset more easily, hyperactivity, or bad dreams.

* Sometimes children act ‘younger’ when they are stressed and may show behaviours from when they were younger (e.g., toileting accidents).

* It’s OK and actually helpful for children

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### Ideas for Screen time Swaps

**by the Shapedown BC Facilitators**

These days, it seems downright impossible to keep our leisure screen time close to the recommended 2 hours per day. Screens have become our primary mode of connecting socially, they provide access to educational materials and of course they provide entertainment and distractions as well. Some parameters you may want to put in place to help are: encourage frequent break (i.e. after 30 minutes of sitting down) to decrease total sedentary time (Healy et al, 2008); turn off screens 1 hour before bed to ensure the light from screens does not interfere with the quality or quantity of our sleep; and turn screens off while eating meals or snacks to remove distractions that could interfere with our ability to listen to our body’s fullness cues.

If you are looking screen time swaps, try:

- An activity such as biking or dancing (see Active Families on pg 4 for more)
- A card game (i.e. Crazy 8s, Snap, Go Fish, Solitaire)
- Baking or cooking together
- Playing with a pet, or walking the dog
- Finding a creative outlet (i.e. paint, draw, take photos, knit, sew)
- Building lego or a blanket fort
- Doing a jigsaw or suduko puzzle
- Playing a strategic board game like chess or checkers
- Reading a book or listening to a podcast
- Singing or playing a musical instrument
- Gardening, or sowing seeds in small planters

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For more information, visit the [Live 5-2-1-0 website](http://example.com)
THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP DURING STRESSFUL TIMES

BY MELANIE EKMAN, SOCIAL WORKER, FRASER HEALTH—SHAPEDOWN BC

The pandemic has resulted in a huge upheaval of our daily lives and routines. Understandably, the situation is stressful for everyone, and it is normal to feel some uncertainty or worry. This anxiety surrounding our new reality may negatively impact our sleep pattern. With kids being out of schools, it is tempting to adopt a more relaxed attitude towards sleep habits. However, maintaining a consistent routine is important in helping kids get the sleep their bodies need. Kids who get adequate amounts of sleep have improved attention, behaviour, learning, memory, and overall better mental and physical health. Sleep also plays a role in maintaining a healthy immune system. Additionally, parents will find it much easier when kids are still on their sleep schedule once they do return to the classroom.

How Much Is Enough?
Children 6-13 years: 9 to 11 hrs/night
Teens 14-17 years: 8 to 10 hrs/night
Adults: 7 to 9 hrs/night
(Sleep Health Foundation, 2020)

Top 8 Tips for Better Sleep
1. Keep a consistent sleep schedule. Go to bed and get up at the same time each day. If you nap, keep it under 30 minutes.
2. Maintain a bedtime routine. This might include taking a bath, reading a book, or listening to music.
3. Practice relaxation or meditation. Doing so before bed can help reduce stress and worry.
4. Keep your sleep environment comfortable. Keep your room dark, quiet, and cool. “White noise” (i.e. whir from a fan) may also help.
5. Turn off screens. Avoid screens at least in the hour before bedtime, and remove them from your room. The blue light interferes with the production of melatonin, our sleep hormone.
6. Wind down physical activity a couple of hours before bed. This allows the body time to relax.
7. Watch the caffeine. Avoid food or drinks with caffeine (i.e. tea, coffee, or pop) in the afternoon and evening.
8. Reserve your bed for sleep. If you do not fall asleep within 30 minutes, get up and do a low-stimulation activity (i.e. read, draw, meditate, listen to soft music).

COVID-19 continued from page 2

when parents manage their behaviour in the way they normally would. This is another way that you can show a sense of “normal” for your child. This also is why taking care of yourself is important; you need energy and patience to help your child with their stress and behaviour.

Teach and remind about the basics.
* Teach your child hand washing with soap and warm water for 20 seconds, or with hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
* Teach your child to not touch their face, eyes, nose, and mouth, and to cover their cough with their elbow.
* Don’t get upset if they forget.
* If you have questions about symptoms, call 8-1-1 or 1-888-COVID19 or text 604-630-0300.

Take care of yourself, both physically and mentally.
* Taking care of yourself achieves two things: you help yourself be the best caregiver you can be, and you model for your child how to take care of themselves.
* Think about basic self-care: eat regularly, hydrate, and get good sleep.
* Think about what you can do to take a break, even if it’s just a few moments.
* Stay in touch with your friends and supportive family members.

Helpful Books for Kids About COVID-19
For elementary school-aged children click here; for preschool and kindergarten-aged children click here.
THE CENTRE FOR HEALTHY WEIGHTS

e-Newsletter

Strong Families:
Healthy Family Balance
By Susan Chahal, Social Worker,
Fraser Health (Punjabi) - Shapedown BC

We are all experiencing a lot of uncertainty and disruption in our day-to-day lives, which has meant adapting to new ways of doing things for work, school, family or even everyday leisure or fun activities. Taking care of our families continues to be a priority. Being mindful of the positive things despite the current circumstances helps keep a healthy balance. Many of us are finding we are spending more time together as a family, which is POSITIVE. Keep a healthy balance at home during this time by:

- Creating a routine at home. Schedule your day as close to your normal routine as possible. Be flexible as needed. Expect that some days will be more challenging than others.
- Dedicating space and time for work, school or projects. Create a space you enjoy working in.
- Planning meals, and eating together.
- Engaging in play together (i.e. board games, puzzles, card games, art), watching a favourite show, or simply getting down to your child’s level to play with them the way they enjoy to play.
- Being kind to yourself and others. We can all learn to be more patient with ourselves and others.
- Breathing fresh air on a daily basis. Try some mindful breathing outside together. Go for family walks or bike rides together while maintaining physical distance from others.
- Sharing favorite memories, stories together. Maybe start journaling family stories or history together.
- Checking in on your screen time. It is normal for screen time to increase right now, but schedule breaks throughout the day (i.e. turn screens off after an hour, or an hour before and after meals). Be mindful of the kind of screen time you engage in (i.e. a family movie together over hours alone gaming or on social media).
- Talking it out (see page 1 for tips on talking to kids about COVID-19).
- Continuing to nurture and strengthen your family relationships by providing emotional connection, structure, routine, warmth, positive attention, and room to talk about anything and everything. Providing a safe, supportive and healthy family environment helps children thrive and grow “resiliency” (the ability to cope and bounce back during challenging times). Keep growing; the journey to healthy living is within you.

ACTIVE FAMILIES
by Kiran Kalkat, Dietitian, BCCH - Shapedown BC with Serena Bring, Manager of Healthy Living Programs, YMCA

Staying active during this time presents its challenges. Many of our “go to” activities are no longer options due to COVID-19 related closures and physical distancing measures. Yet it remains ever important that we find ways to keep our bodies moving every day, not only to maintain our health and weight, but also to support our mental well-being. If you are looking for inspiration to get you and your family moving, check out:

- YMCA VIDEOS: Our partners at the Y have shared home workout videos for all ages on the YThrive Home Youtube account. Look for clips labelled “GROW” for content tailored to children between 8 to 15 years of age.
- LIVE 5-2-1-0 APP & WEBSITE: This app supports kids 8 to 12 years of age (and their families) in building healthy habits by following the Live 5-2-1-0 messages: 5+ vegetables and fruits, no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time, at least 1 hour of active play, and 0 sugary drinks every day. Kids set a goal and choose tiny steps to work towards a reward! Note: Some tiny steps may need to be adapted to the current environment; an update is in the works. Alternatively, explore the Live 5-2-1-0 website.
- ParticipACTION APP & WEBSITE: This app features an activity tracker, customized content, and prizes. The ParticipACTION website has tons of resources, including this blog: 15 ways for you and your family to stay active.
Healthy Bites continued from page 1
Put together a meal plan 1 to 2 weeks at a time to reduce the number of trips you need to make to the grocery store. Think easy to prepare meals, and include some family favourites. Be sure to plan for leftovers for the next day, or to store in the freezer. Soups, casseroles and lasagnas freeze and reheat particularly well.

Stock up on shelf-stable foods.
Fresh vegetables and fruit: Purchase fresh vegetables (i.e. carrots, sweet potatoes, potatoes, cabbage, beets, squash, onions, garlic, ginger) and fruit (i.e. apples, melons, oranges, grapefruits) that keep well over time. Eat any fresh produce that spoils quickly first. For other more perishable fruit (i.e. pineapple, mangoes, peaches), chop and store in the freezer in air-tight containers or bags. Note: Fresh fruits and veggies are safe to eat; there is no evidence to that COVID-19 is transmitted through food. For more, visit the BCCDC’s Food Safety page.
Frozen or canned vegetables and fruit: Frozen vegetables and fruits, stir-fry mixes and smoothie blends are convenient to have on hand for quick meals or breakfast smoothies. Fruit cups or canned fruit packed in water, as well as canned vegetables with no added sodium are excellent shelf-stable options, and can be a more affordable way to continue to include vegetables and fruit in your meals.

Grains: Whole or rolled oats, rice (wild, brown, or brown basmati), whole wheat flour, quinoa, couscous, barley, high fibre cereals, whole grain crackers and whole wheat wraps/pitas all keep well. If you can, buy an extra loaf of bread to store in the freezer; pull out and toast as needed! Plant proteins: Canned or dried lentils and beans (i.e., black beans, chickpeas, kidney beans, mixed beans, lentils, split peas) are especially affordable plant proteins that can be thrown into soups, stews, sauces, chilis, and curries. Other plant proteins to consider: unsalted nuts/seeds and nut/seed butters, tofu and frozen edamame. Animal proteins: Canned or frozen fish is an affordable way to continue to include fish in your diet. Other proteins to stock up on are eggs and lower-fat hard cheeses. Greek yogurt and plain yogurt typically last longer than regular, flavoured yogurt.

Write out a shopping list before you go. With the aforementioned steps in mind, write out a grocery list. This will make sure you buy what you need AND that you spend the least amount of time in the store. Designate a grocery shopper in your household. Avoid shopping during peak hours. Do your very best to practice physical distancing while out. Try to touch only what you are buying. Note: You may wish to explore a grocery delivery or “click and collect” service. Walmart, Superstore, Save On Foods, and Costco offer one or both services. Check estimated wait times right now.

Recipe Round-up
We asked our team of dietitians to share recipes using some of the shelf-stable essentials highlighted in the Healthy Bites article above. Here are their picks:

- Mango salsa fish tacos and almond coconut granola — Patricia Good, dietitian (Island Health)
- Vegetarian quinoa chili — Rachael Heer-Bola, dietitian (South Asian Program)
- Lentil spaghetti sauce — Kiran Kalkat, dietitian (BCCH)
- Roasted tomato and cauliflower pasta bake — Caroline Klemens, dietitian (BCCH)
- Stir-fried bok choy with tofu skin — Stephanie Lau, dietitian (Chinese Program)
- Banana nut smoothie — Lisa Symons, dietitian (Fraser Health)

If you are looking for more recipes, be sure to check out Dietitians of Canada’s Cookspiration.com (which also has an app) and Unlockfood.ca as well as BetterTogetherBC.

SHAPEDOWN BC LOCATIONS
VANCOUVER • LANGLEY/SURREY • RICHMOND • KAMLOOPS • NANAIMO
Visit our website for more: www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/clinics/shapedown-bc