



At Peel Children's Centre and Nexus Youth Services, we understand that you and your family may be feeling anxious about the COVID-19 pandemic and overwhelmed with information.

In order to support you during these challenging and uncertain times, we have found some resources to help you and your family cope. All of the resources in this package are from reliable sources, including the World Health Organization, Children's Mental Health Ontario, the Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health, and Peel Public Health.

In this package you will also find links to other resources – such as podcasts, videos, guided meditations and other online articles – that you may find helpful.

As always, our **24/7 Crisis Response Service for Children, Youth and Families** remains available – call us for help at any time: **416-410-8615**.

If you are over 18, you can call **CMHA Peel Dufferin's 24/7 Crisis Response Service** at **905-278-9036** for help at any time.

You can also follow Peel Children's Centre on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) for additional resources and information related to COVID-19.

We hope you find these resources helpful. If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to suggest another resource we can share with our community, please email amacgregor@peelcc.org or tag us on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn.

Talking to Your Anxious Child About COVID-19 Tips for Parents and Caregivers

The growing concerns about COVID-19 are certainly prevalent in the media, social conversations, and the thoughts of most Ontarians. What information we do have is being used to make ever changing decisions as parents and organizations about how best to keep people safe. Along with all of the information, there is also an abundance of unknowns and quite possibly fears.

Children and youth who have an anxiety disorder may find the information about COVID-19 in the news and around them especially worrisome. It would be most beneficial for them if information is presented in a calm, structured and realistic manner. With that in mind, for many children the most reassuring way to manage this information is in conversation and relationship with parent(s)/guardian(s).

The COVID-19 situation is constantly evolving and information can be confusing, so, as a parent what do you say and do?

Begin with informing yourself. You can find up to date information about the symptoms, prevalence and current recommendations from your local public health unit or the Ontario Public Health (<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/>). The World Health Organization and Government of Canada are also providing large scale updates. Remember, choosing responsible sources for your information demonstrates to your child how to make good choices around media and information gathering.

Focus on the details that are most relevant and/or things that you and your child can control. Limit conversations with/around them about things they can not control or help with (i.e.- lost wages for parents, a family friend who has travelled, a classmate that may have been exposed, etc.).

Limit routine changes where possible Routine allows for predictability, which can be supportive for those with anxiety disorders. When routines can not be kept up (school closures, activity cancellations, etc) then contemplate what structure you can provide. Consider supporting your child with an individual routine including such activities as learning opportunities, self-care activities, and physical activity. Be sure to add in something that helps to bring your child joy each day.

Share information in as concrete a way as possible. *Speak to them about the ways you and the other adults around them are helping to keep them safe!* Review good hygiene practices and, if appropriate, make fun games out of these habits. If they wish to discuss case numbers, statistics they have heard, economic impact, political fallout, etc., help them to be sure they have a reliable source. Take time to validate their concerns with your words and your attention.

Correct misinformation Help your child/teen to have the facts to work with. Ask them what they know about Coronavirus and what they have 'heard' (from friends, media, family members, etc.). Spend some time helping them to talk through this and encourage them to approach you with any other questions they have rather than going to the internet, the media or friends. BE HONEST! And answer in a way that accounts for the child's age. Worry will not help them but being confidently prepared and "armed" with correct, timely information may. It is best to avoid statements like, "Don't worry" or "It will

all be alright” you can assure them that you and other adults around them are doing everything they can to help keep them and the people they love safe and healthy.

For those children/teens who do well with visuals, help them to create a reminder for themselves of what they can control - they can wash their hands regularly, practice social distancing and limit touching their face. *(Do monitor children for any increase in these behaviours that are not needed - like excessive hand washing, perseverating on risk factors, becoming fearful of leaving the house, etc.)*

Strategic News Exposure Last, but in no way least, limit exposure to unnecessary anxiety provoking information/activities. This likely means limiting exposure to social media, newscasts, and the newspaper. This may be more difficult with older children/teens however, this may be an ideal time to work with your child/teen to practice healthy management of information, an especially important skill for those who are dealing with anxiety.

*“Anxiety makes us overestimate risk and underestimate our ability to cope. ... The goal is to help your child realistically evaluate risks based on available information.” **

Additional Resources

‘Brains On’ (A Podcast for kids) - [Understanding Coronavirus and how germs spread](#)

WHO Infographic - [Helping children cope with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak](#)

MPR News - [Comic about Coronavirus for Kids](#) - based on an NPR interview

Psychology Today - Article: [How to talk to Kids and Teens about the Coronavirus](#)

Seattle Children’s Hospital Research Foundation - [Helping Children and Teens Cope with Anxiety About COVID-19](#)

CDC - [Talking with children about Coronavirus Disease 2019: Messages for parents, school staff, and others working with children](#)

*Source: (<https://pulse.seattlechildrens.org/helping-children-and-teens-cope-with-anxiety-covid-19/>)



COVID-19: Supporting a discussion with children and youth

*note that in this resource COVID-19 and Coronavirus are used interchangeably and refers the respiratory disease that is caused by a novel coronavirus that was discovered in 2019.

Resources to support parents/caregivers discussing COVID-19 with children/youth

Websites

Children's Mental Health Ontario: [Talking to your anxious child about COVID-19](#)

- Includes recommendations to stay informed, keep a consistent routine for children/youth, being open and honest with the facts about the virus, and suggests preventative measures
- Includes links to additional resources

Canadian Psychological Association: [Mental health and coping during COVID-19](#)

- Provides general information about how people might cope with COVID-19
- Includes suggestions on how to support those who have pre-existing mental health conditions
- Provides advice for parents/caregivers to identify and support children who are stressed by COVID-19

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US)

- [Talking with children about corona virus](#)
- [Managing stress and anxiety during stressful situations](#)
- [Key facts about coronavirus disease](#)

[Kids health Coronavirus: What kids can do](#)

- Information and tips on how to respond to the virus, *written for a young audience*
- Provides information on how to prevent contracting or passing on germs to protect oneself and their family

Child Mind Institute: [Talking to kids about the coronavirus](#)

- Includes a short video by Dr. Jamie Howard (Director, Trauma and Resilience Service, Child Mind Institute) on how to have conversations with children about the coronavirus and its impact
- Emphasizes the importance of being open and available for children to ask questions



- Highlights the value of keeping a routine and consistency during times of change and schedule disruptions (e.g., school closures)
- References other sources including the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), resource on 'what to do when children are anxious'

Psychology Today: How to talk to kids and teens about the coronavirus

- Provides suggestions on how to discuss the COVID-19 virus and support children and youth during this time
- Breaks down suggestions by developmental age (e.g. preschool, elementary school, high school)

Print resources

A comic exploring the new coronavirus

- Print and fold comic: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PYrKYfOBa4p-azl5z_46KJMb1FSmL_Y/view
- The website link includes a short 3-minute audio clip that explains (to children and youth) what the virus is and preventative measures we can take to stay healthy

WHO infographic: Helping children cope with stress during the 2019 nCoV outbreak

Coronavirus Social Story

- An infographic developed by an autism educator to help alleviate fears and anxiety children may be experiencing at this time

Parent/caregiver guide to helping families cope with COVID-19

- Includes information on COVID-19
- Provides suggestions on how to prepare families for the impact of the outbreak with links to resources that have accurate and up-to date information
- Summarizes information on preventative measures to stay healthy
- Provides coping strategies to support families and children with the stress of an outbreak
- Provides strategies on how to help and support children and is broken down by age group/developmental period

Talking to children about COVID-19: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

- 14 suggestions to help parents/providers have conversations about the COVID-19 outbreak with children/youth

Helping children cope with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak



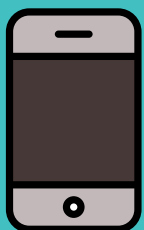
Children may respond to stress in different ways such as being more clingy, anxious, withdrawing, angry or agitated, bedwetting etc.

Respond to your child's reactions in a supportive way, listen to their concerns and give them extra love and attention.

Children need adults' love and attention during difficult times. Give them extra time and attention.

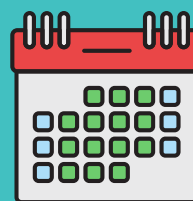
Remember to listen to your children, speak kindly and reassure them.

If possible, make opportunities for the child to play and relax.



Try and keep children close to their parents and family and avoid separating children and their caregivers to the extent possible. If separation occurs (e.g. hospitalization) ensure regular contact (e.g. via phone) and re-assurance.

Keep to regular routines and schedules as much as possible, or help create new ones in a new environment, including school/learning as well as time for safely playing and relaxing.



Provide facts about what has happened, explain what is going on now and give them clear information about how to reduce their risk of being infected by the disease in words that they can understand depending on their age.

This also includes providing information about what could happen in a re-assuring way (e.g. a family member and/or the child may start not feeling well and may have to go to the hospital for some time so doctors can help them feel better).

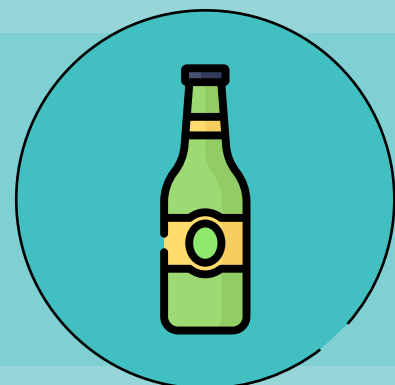
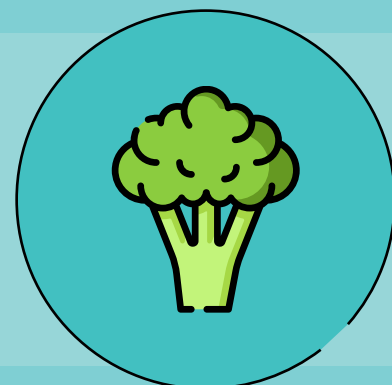
Coping with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak



It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis.

Talking to people you trust can help. Contact your friends and family.

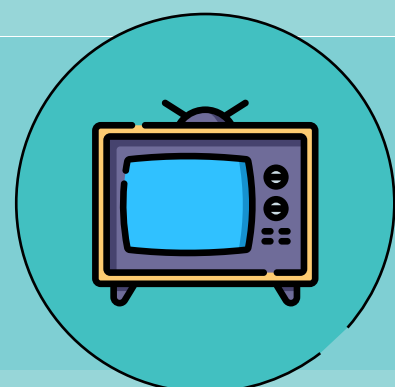
If you must stay at home, maintain a healthy lifestyle - including proper diet, sleep, exercise and social contacts with loved ones at home and by email and phone with other family and friends.



Don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions.

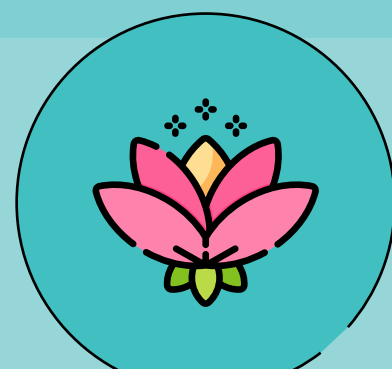
If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker or counsellor. Have a plan, where to go to and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required.

Get the facts. Gather information that will help you accurately determine your risk so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as WHO website or, a local or state public health agency.



Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you and your family spend watching or listening to media coverage that you perceive as upsetting.

Draw on skills you have used in the past that have helped you to manage previous life's adversities and use those skills to help you manage your emotions during the challenging time of this outbreak.



Mental Health and Psychosocial Considerations During COVID-19 Outbreak

12 March 2020

In January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of a new coronavirus disease to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. WHO stated there is a high risk of the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) spreading to other countries around the world. In March 2020, WHO made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic.

WHO and public health authorities around the world are acting to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. However, this time of crisis is generating stress in the population. These mental health considerations were developed by the WHO's Department of Mental Health and Substance Use as messages targeting different groups to support for mental and psychosocial well-being during COVID-19 outbreak.

General population

1. COVID-19 has and is likely to affect people from many countries, in many geographical locations. Do not attach it to any ethnicity or nationality. Be empathetic to all those who are affected, in and from any country. People who are affected by Covid-19 have not done anything wrong, and they deserve our support, compassion and kindness.
2. Do not refer to people with the disease as "COVID-19 cases", "victims" "COVID-19 families" or the "diseased". They are "people who have COVID-19", "people who are being treated for COVID-19", "people who are recovering from COVID-19" and after recovering from COVID-19 their life will go on with their jobs, families and loved ones. It is important to separate a person from having an identity defined by COVID-19, to reduce stigma.
3. Minimize watching, reading or listening to news that causes you to feel anxious or distressed; seek information only from trusted sources and mainly to take practical steps to prepare your plans and protect yourself and loved ones. Seek information updates at specific times during the day, once or twice. The sudden and near-constant stream of news reports about an outbreak can cause anyone to feel worried. Get the facts; not the rumors and misinformation. Gather information at regular intervals, from [WHO website](https://www.who.int) and local health authorities platforms, in order to help you distinguish facts from rumors. Facts can help to minimize fears.

4. Protect yourself and be supportive to others. Assisting others in their time of need can benefit the person receiving support as well as the helper. For example, check-in by phone on neighbors or people in your community who may need some extra assistance. Working together as one community can help to create solidarity in addressing Covid-19 together.

5. Find opportunities to amplify positive and hopeful stories and positive images of local people who have experienced COVID-19. For example, stories of people who have recovered or who have supported a loved one and are willing to share their experience.

6. Honor caretakers and healthcare workers supporting people affected with COVID-19 in your community. Acknowledge the role they play to save lives and keep your loved ones safe.

Healthcare workers

7. For health workers, feeling under pressure is a likely experience for you and many of your health worker colleagues. It is quite normal to be feeling this way in the current situation. Stress and the feelings associated with it are by no means a reflection that you cannot do your job or that you are weak. Managing your mental health and psychosocial wellbeing during this time is as important as managing your physical health.

8. Take care of yourself at this time. Try and use helpful coping strategies such as ensuring sufficient rest and respite during work or between shifts, eat sufficient and healthy food, engage in physical activity, and stay in contact with family and friends. Avoid using unhelpful coping strategies such as tobacco, alcohol or other drugs. In the long term, these can worsen your mental and physical wellbeing. This is a unique and unprecedented scenario for many workers, particularly if they have not been involved in similar responses. Even so, using strategies that have worked for you in the past to manage times of stress can benefit you now. You are most likely to know how to de-stress and you should not be hesitant in keeping yourself psychologically well. This is not a sprint; it's a marathon.

9. Some healthcare workers may unfortunately experience avoidance by their family or community due to stigma or fear. This can make an already challenging situation far more difficult. If possible, staying connected with your loved ones including through digital methods is one way to maintain contact. Turn to your colleagues, your manager or other trusted persons for social support- your colleagues may be having similar experiences to you.

10. Use understandable ways to share messages with people with intellectual, cognitive and psychosocial disabilities. Forms of communication that do not rely solely on written information should be utilized if you are a team leader or manager in a health facility.

11. Know how to provide support to, for people who are affected with COVID-19 and know how to link them with available resources. This is especially important for those who require mental health and psychosocial support. The stigma associated with mental health problems may cause

reluctance to seek support for both COVID-19 and mental health conditions. The [mhGAP Humanitarian Intervention Guide](#) includes clinical guidance for addressing priority mental health conditions and is designed for use by general health workers.

Team leaders or managers in health facility

12. Keeping all staff protected from chronic stress and poor mental health during this response means that they will have a better capacity to fulfil their roles. Be sure to keep in mind that the current situation will not go away overnight and you should focus on longer term occupational capacity rather than repeated short-term crisis responses.

13. Ensure good quality communication and accurate information updates are provided to all staff. Rotate workers from higher-stress to lower-stress functions. Partner inexperienced workers with their more experienced colleagues. The buddy system helps to provide support, monitor stress and reinforce safety procedures. Ensure that outreach personnel enter the community in pairs. Initiate, encourage and monitor work breaks. Implement flexible schedules for workers who are directly impacted or have a family member impacted by a stressful event. Ensure you build in time for colleagues to provide social support to each other.

14. If you are a team leader or manager in a health facility, facilitate access to, and ensure staff are aware of where they can access mental health and psychosocial support services. Managers and team leaders are also facing similar stressors as their staff, and potentially additional pressure in the level of responsibility of their role. It is important that the above provisions and strategies are in place for both workers and managers, and that managers can be a role-model of self-care strategies to mitigate stress.

15. Orient responders, including nurses, ambulance drivers, volunteers, case identifiers, teachers and community leaders and workers in quarantine sites, on how to provide basic emotional and practical support to affected people using [psychological first aid](#)

16. Manage urgent mental health and neurological complaints (e.g. delirium, psychosis, severe anxiety or depression) within emergency or general health care facilities. Appropriate trained and qualified staff may need to be deployed to these locations when time permits, general health care staff capacity in mental health and psychosocial support should be increased (see [mhGAP Humanitarian Intervention Guide](#))

17. Ensure availability of essential, generic psychotropic medications at all levels of health care. People living with long-term mental health conditions or epileptic seizures will need uninterrupted access to their medication, and sudden discontinuation should be avoided.

Care providers for children

18. Help children find positive ways to express feelings such as fear and sadness. Every child has their own way to express emotions. Sometimes engaging in a creative activity, such as playing, and drawing can facilitate this process. Children feel relieved if they can express and communicate their feelings in a safe and supportive environment.

19. Keep children close to their parents and family, if considered safe for the child, and avoid separating children and their caregivers as much as possible. If a child needs to be separated from their primary caregiver, ensure that appropriate alternative care is provided and that a social worker, or equivalent, will regularly follow up on the child. Further, ensure that during periods of separation, regular contact with parents and caregivers is maintained, such as twice-daily scheduled phone or video calls or other age-appropriate communication (e.g., social media depending on the age of the child).

20. Maintain familiar routines in daily life as much as possible, or create new routines, especially if children must stay at home. Provide engaging age appropriate activities for children, including activities for their learning. As much as possible, encourage children to continue to play and socialize with others, even if only within the family when advised to restrict social contact.

21. During times of stress and crisis, it is common for children to seek more attachment and be more demanding on parents. Discuss COVID-19 with your children using honest and age-appropriate way. If your children have concerns, addressing those together may ease their anxiety. Children will observe adults' behaviors and emotions for cues on how to manage their own emotions during difficult times. Additional advice available [here](#)

Older adults, care providers and people with underlying health conditions

22. Older adults, especially in isolation and those with cognitive decline/dementia, may become more anxious, angry, stressed, agitated, and withdrawn during the outbreak/while in quarantine. Provide practical and emotional support through informal networks (families) and health professionals.

23. Share simple facts about what is going on and give clear information about how to reduce risk of infection in words older people with/without cognitive impairment can understand. Repeat the information whenever necessary. Instructions need to be communicated in a clear, concise, respectful and patient way. It may also be helpful for information to be displayed in writing or pictures. Engage their family and other support networks in providing information and helping them practice prevention measures (e.g. handwashing etc.)

24. If you have an underlying health condition, make sure to have access to any medications that you are currently using. Activate your social contacts to provide you with assistance, if needed.

25. Be prepared and know in advance where and how to get practical help if needed, like calling a Taxi, having food delivered and requesting medical care. Make sure you have up to 2 weeks of all your regular medicines that you may require.

26. Learn simple daily physical exercises to perform at home, in quarantine or isolation to maintain mobility and reduce boredom.

27. Keep regular routines and schedules as much as possible or help create new ones in a new environment, including regular exercising, cleaning, daily chores, singing, painting or other activities. Help others, through peer support, neighbor checking, and childcare for medical personnel restricted in hospitals fighting against COVID-19 when safe to do so. in accordance with previous ones. Keep regular contact with loved ones (e.g. via phone or other accesses).

People in isolation

28. Stay connected and maintain your social networks. Even when isolated, try as much as possible to keep your personal daily routines or create new routines. If health authorities have recommended limiting your physical social contact to contain the outbreak, you can stay connected via e-mail, social media, video conference and telephone.

29. During times of stress, pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in healthy activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly, keep regular sleep routines and eat healthy food. Keep things in perspective. Public health agencies and experts in all countries are working on the outbreak to ensure the availability of the best care to those affected.

30. A near-constant stream of news reports about an outbreak can cause anyone to feel anxious or distressed. Seek information updates and practical guidance at specific times during the day from health professionals and WHO website and avoid listening to or following rumors that make you feel uncomfortable.

Stay informed

Find the latest information from WHO on where COVID-19 is spreading:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>

Advice and guidance from WHO on COVID-19

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

<https://www.epi-win.com/>

Addressing Social Stigma:

https://www.epi-win.com/sites/epiwin/files/content/attachments/2020-02-24/COVID19%20Stigma%20Guide%2024022020_1.pdf

Briefing note on addressing mental Health and Psychosocial Aspects of COVID-19

<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-reference-group-mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-emergency-settings/briefing-note-about>

Updated Peel Food Bank Hours

Novel Coronavirus COVID-19

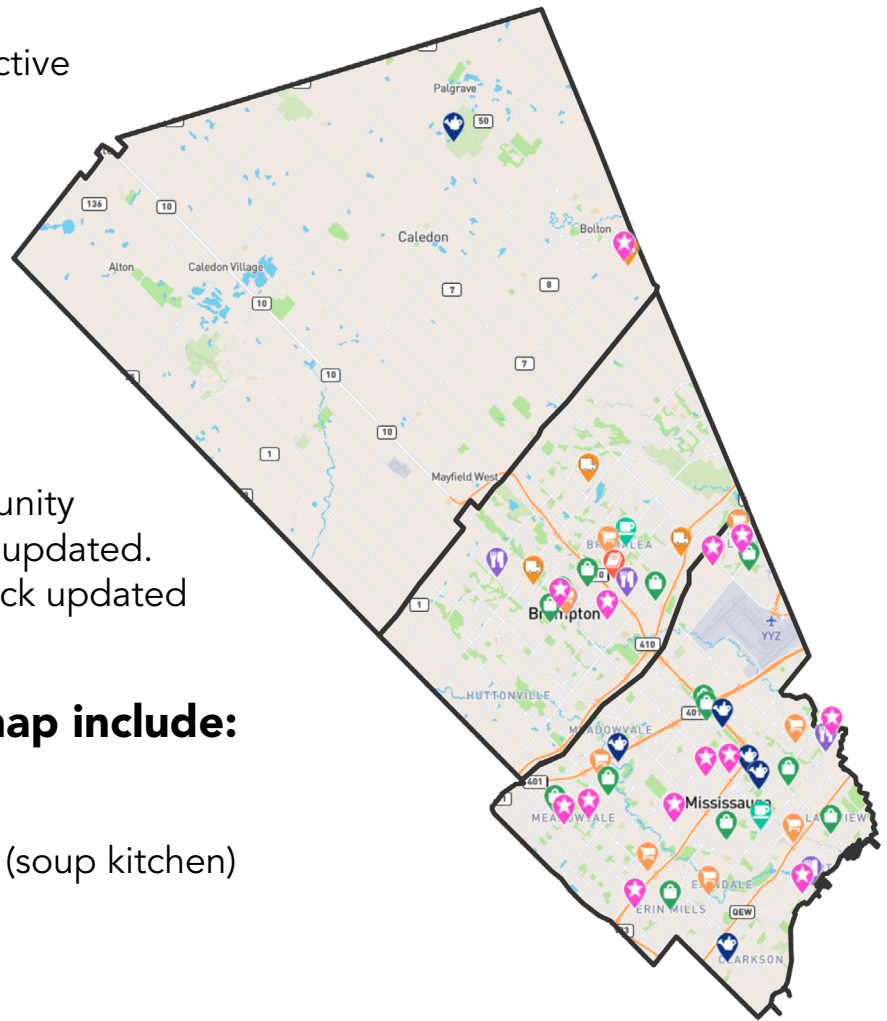
Did you know we have a map that helps people find community food programs?

The Peel Food Map is an interactive web map that allows residents and social service agencies to access information about food programs and organizations, in Brampton, Caledon and Mississauga, sorted by categories and locations.

To support residents through covid-19, food bank and community food program hours have been updated. Please use the food map to check updated hours peelregion.ca/foodmap.

Food programs on the map include:

- breakfast programs
- community meal programs (soup kitchen)
- food banks
- food pantries



The Peel Food Map is a resource supported by the Peel Hunger Relief Network (PHRN).

For more information on the Peel Hunger Relief Network, please visit peelhungerreliefnetwork.ca.

Additional Links and Resources

Free guided meditations and mindfulness resources for children, youth and adults from the creators of the Calm app:

<https://www.calm.com/blog/take-a-deep-breath>

Tips and coping strategies to help you if you feel worried about COVID19 from Anxiety Canada:

<https://www.anxietycanada.com/articles/what-to-do-if-you-are-anxious-or-worried-about-coronavirus-covid-19/>

Mental health and COVID-19 pandemic – resources from CAMH:

<http://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19>

COVID-19 resources for children and families from Kerry's Place:

<https://www.kerrysplace.org/covid-19-resources/>

Tips for managing anxiety and stress related to COVID-19 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

How to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus – PBS:

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-coronavirus>



How You and Your Kids Can De-Stress During Coronavirus – PBS:

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-you-and-your-kids-can-de-stress-during-coronavirus>

Parenting toolboxes from the Psychology Foundation of Canada:

[https://psychologyfoundation.org/Content/Parents/Children_4-13 /Toolbox-Activities-English.aspx](https://psychologyfoundation.org/Content/Parents/Children_4-13_Toolbox-Activities-English.aspx)

7 essential parenting strategies from the Psychology Foundation of Canada:

https://psychologyfoundation.org/Content/Parents/Infant_0-3 /7-Essential-Parenting-Strategies.aspx

Coronavirus (COVID-19): How to Talk to Your Child – KidsHealth.org:

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/coronavirus-how-talk-child.html>

Supporting Families During COVID-19 – Child Mind Institute:

<https://childmind.org/coping-during-covid-19-resources-for-parents/>

3 tips for helping clients manage uncertainty, from the National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine

<https://www.nicabm.com/3-step-approach-for-managing-uncertainty/>