

BENEFITS OF ATTENDING SCHOOL ... EVEN DURING COVID-19

The Manitoba Government and Winnipeg School Division are asking students to attend school as much as possible.

We recognize that is hard to follow through on the recommendation.

The fear and anxiety that this pandemic is causing is real for many of us.

What are the benefits of coming to school?

- Our brains and hearts are wired for social connection. Being around others improves our mood.
- Facing worries by coming to school can help to shrink feelings of anxiety and build self-confidence.
- Attending school generates feelings of productivity and personal accomplishments.
- School helps students maintain a routine, contributing to positive mental health and wellness.
- School helps students develop a variety of life skills, beyond academics (e.g. problem-solving, time management, getting along with others).



Things to keep in mind ...

- Schools are controlled environments. With the recommended safety protocols in place, little transmission is happening.
- If you do choose to have your child stay home, plan with them what their day will look like. Their day should include time for self-care, schoolwork, and chores, etc.
- Taking a mental health day periodically may be beneficial for students. On the other hand, frequently remaining at home, staying in bed, and/or spending too much time on screens can be problematic. While engaging in these activities might bring comfort and temporary relief from their feelings of anxiety, over time, it may prevent them from developing important life skills and impact their mental health.



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Ways to support your child

Establish routines to provide a sense of safety and security

- Attend school
- Have family meals
- Complete chores
- Have a regular bedtime

Monitor how much you talk about COVID

- Stay informed by checking the news once a day
- Constant messages about the virus can increase feelings of worry

Show confidence in your child's ability to face their anxiety

- Remind them of times they were brave
- Praise with rewards, even when steps are small



Help your child focus on what they can control

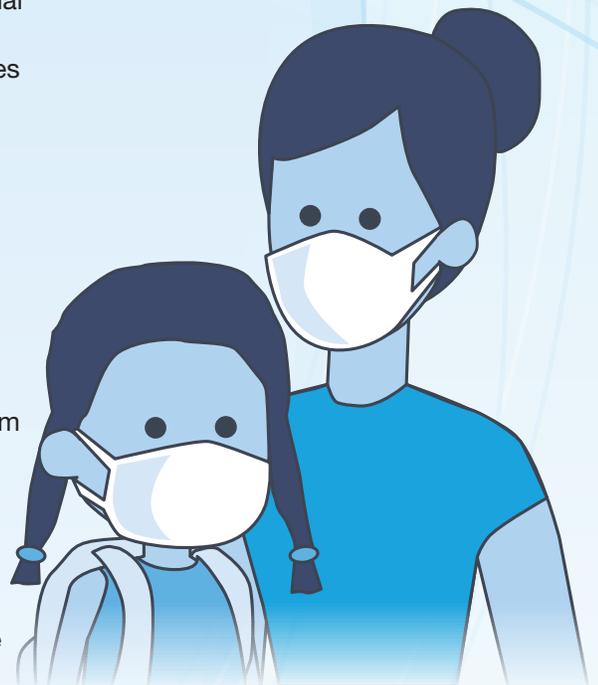
- Going to school
- Washing their hands regularly
- Getting exercise daily
- Spending time outside
- Treating others with kindness
- Completing their schoolwork
- Talking with their friends or family members in person, over the phone, or on line

Model healthy ways to cope with anxiety

- Acknowledge that anxiety is understandable and normal during this time
- Talk about different strategies for managing stress
 - Exercise
 - Spending time outside
 - Focused breathing
 - Drawing
 - Journaling

Find pockets of joy during difficult times

- Plan activities and mark them on your calendar
- Make your own pizza
- Play board games
- Walk outdoors
- Have a dance party
- Make a card for a loved one



If you would like help with supporting your child in attending more frequently, contact a member of your school team (e.g., administration, guidance counsellor, resource teacher, Clinical Support Services)

For more information on anxiety and ways to manage it visit the Anxiety Canada web page
<https://www.anxietycanada.com>

For more information about community resources and helpful websites and apps see Winnipeg School Division's Healthy Minds web page

<https://www.winnipegsd.ca/healthyminds/Pages/Healthy-Minds-Mental-Health-and-WellnessResources.aspx>



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