

EarlyON Resources for Parents & Caregivers

Fun, educational activities that promotes healthy child development at home

In this activity guide you will find useful activities for your child when at home. During this time when physically distancing from others is important, having a plan and activities ready for your child may help to make your day go a little easier. The activities in this guide have been gathered from EarlyON partners as well as free internet resources.

Contents

EarlyON Resources for Parents & Caregivers	1
General.....	3
Parent-Child Play Ideas	3
Thinking About Your Daily Routine	3
Toy/Material Rotation	3
Outside Time	3
Big Ideas	3
Physical Play	4
Quiet Play.....	4
For Your Baby – (0 to 1 ½ years)	4
Animals.....	4
Foods.....	4
Bath Time	5
Solid Foods	5
Communication.....	5
More Ideas	5
For Your Toddler – (1 ½ to 2 ½ years).....	6
Learning with Body Parts	6
Discovering New Food	6
Fun with Bubbles.....	6
Gardening.....	6
Match the Animals.....	6
Challenges.....	7
Playing Outdoors.....	7
Hand and Footprint.....	7
Other Ideas for Toddlers	7

For Your Pre-schooler – (2.5 to 4 years)7

- Cardboard Face Art 7
- Can You Spot It? I Spy with My Little Eye..... 7
- Mirror, Mirror 8
- Play, Care, Share 8
- Sink or Float 8
- Scavenger Hunt 8
- Animal Friends 8

For Your Kindergartener – (4 to 6 years)11

- Real Work..... 11
- A Tracing Adventure 11
- Map It!..... 11
- Paint a Rock..... 11
- Pom-Pom Tube Ramp 11
- Learning to Measure 12
- Trading Places 12
- My Hands Can Say..... 12
- Going on a Rhyme Hunt 12
- Nature Walk 12
- Hopscotch 12

How to Talk to Your Child About Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).....13

- 1. Ask open questions and listen 13
- 2. Be honest: explain the truth in a child-friendly way 13
- 3. Show them how to protect themselves and their friends 13
- 4. Reassure them 13
- 5. Check if they are experiencing or spreading stigma 14
- 6. Look for the helpers 14
- 7. Take care of yourself 14
- 8. Close conversations with care 14

Useful Telephone Numbers15

Mental Health Support.....15

City of Toronto Links16

References.....16

General

Parent-Child Play Ideas

As you look for activities to do with your child, consider offering different types of play to meet their needs and keep the fun going. Independent play (when children play by themselves with you nearby) is also an important type of play—and parents shouldn't feel guilty about giving their babies and toddlers a chance to play on their own.

Thinking About Your Daily Routine

Try to keep daily routines as stable as possible during this time, such as wake-up times, meals, naps, and bedtimes. Children thrive on predictability, and it's good for their caregivers, too. (It's much easier to deal with a long day with little ones if it's divided into smaller, more manageable pieces.)

Toy/Material Rotation

If you have a few toys or kid-friendly materials, try a rotation. Pick a few things to leave out for your child to play with and put others away out of sight. After a week or so, switch out the toys/materials they've been using for the ones stored away, it will feel like they have new toys!

We know toys/materials will only entertain for so long, and then boredom can set in. Boredom for infants and toddlers may not look the same as it does for us. Signs your little one is bored:

- Fussing or whining
- Struggling to focus or engage in play
- Becoming more aggressive



Outside Time

Getting outside will probably be refreshing and a great change of scenery for all of you.

- Most play that happens inside the house can also happen outside, so if the weather allows, bring some blocks outside, read together or colour/paint outdoors.
- During this time, it is essential that you follow Public Health practices of physical distancing, and playtime with other children should be avoided. Instead, hop like frogs, run, walk backward, roll down a hill, spin or even lie on your back and look at the clouds.

Once you are back at home make sure you wash your hands!

Big Ideas

To increase the number of words your child knows and uses, choose a BIG IDEA to follow for the day.

- Every day help your child learn new words related to an idea that interests them. Use pictures or photographs if available and help your child link the words to objects or people around them.
- Ask other family members to participate. If possible, choose a book about the big idea that can be read multiple times.

Physical Play

Little ones need to move and work their bodies... and voices. They need opportunities to be loud, run, climb, and jump. This may happen outside or inside. Here are some ideas:



- Use a bedsheet as a parachute (open it wide and raise it up above your heads, then bring it down to the floor). For infants, raise and lower a light blanket over them while playing peek-a-boo.
- Put couch cushions on the floor and crawl, walk, or jump from one to the next (don't touch the floor, it's hot lava!).
- Build a fort with sheets, blankets, couch cushions, pillows, chairs, and more. You can even "camp-out" indoors!
- Create an obstacle course using furniture, pillows, and toys.
- Turn on some music and have a dance party.

Quiet Play

Children (and you) will also need some quiet time each day. This is great for relaxing and recharging.

- Read together or independently (toddlers can flip through books and talk about what they see)
- Coloring
- Puzzles
- Block building
- Sorting objects (like pots/pans or clothes)
- Pretend play with stuffed animals, dolls, trains, cars, or kitchen items for "playing house"
- Stickers on paper – you can draw large shapes, letters, or numbers on paper and your child can line the shape with stickers
- Tape on paper – you can cut short pieces of masking tape and your child can stick it to a piece of paper (sounds boring, but little ones love it)

For Your Baby – (0 to 1 ½ years)

Animals

Babies are often captivated by watching animals and birds outside or through the window. Stay with your baby and let them watch.

- Teaching your child animal safety begins early. You can support your baby's interest in animals by, for example, feeding birds bread or installing a bird feeder to encourage birds to visit.
- For an indoor activity, you can show your baby pictures of animals or give them feathers to touch or other objects that have texture.



Foods

Name the foods that your baby eats, during meals. By talking about objects over and over you are helping your baby understand that a word like "strawberry" stands for a sweet red fruit. Ask your baby:

- Would you like some banana?
- How about more carrots?
- When you open the fridge, you can point out the fruits and vegetables that your baby likes to eat. Soon, your baby may be pointing out the ones they recognize all by themselves!

Bath Time

During your baby's bath, you can sing a song, as you sing, be sure to gently touch each body part.



Head and shoulders knees and toes
Knees and toes, knees and toes
Head and shoulders knees and toes
Eyes, ears, mouth and nose
Head and shoulders knees and toes
Knees and toes

Solid Foods

You can slice into bite-sized pieces different fruits and vegetables (ask your health care provider before introducing new foods). Let your baby play with the food, touch it, and lick it. Maybe they will even taste it.



- Which ones do they like the best?
- You can also let your baby touch different fruits and vegetables so they can experience their very different textures and colors.
- Which ones do they like to touch?
- Which ones don't they like?

Communication

As you and your baby play with bubbles, focus on repeating the words "bubble" and "pop." Point at the bubbles floating away:

- Look at the bubbles go!
- Cue your baby to "Pop the bubbles"
- See if your baby tries to imitate you. Listen for "buh" or "pa" sounds.

More Ideas

- Bring their stroller outside for a walk or a story.
- Lay a blanket on the grass for tummy time.
- Listen to music and sing together, talk about what you see outside.
- Park the stroller or hold your baby so they can watch an older sibling or other children play.
- Let your baby play with bubbles. Seat them in their high chair or stroller. Meanwhile, squirt some dish detergent in the bowl and then run water into the bowl, making lots of bubbles. Scoop a handful of bubbles out and put them on your baby's tray. Watch them touch and explore these funny bubbles. Just be careful your baby doesn't eat them!

For Your Toddler – (1 ½ to 2 ½ years)

Learning with Body Parts

- Ask your toddler "Where's your...nose?"
- After they show you, ask "Where's your...knee?"
- Continue the game, giving them a kiss on each body part.
- With toddlers who are potty training, it is important to give them words to talk about their private parts. This helps children understand what is happening during potty training and to communicate more clearly with you when they feel a need to use the potty.

Discovering New Food

- During meals, talk about the different fruits and vegetables your child is eating. Ask them which they like best. Talk about their colours and textures.
- Talk about how each one looks and tastes. What fruits and vegetables are your child's favourites? Try a cooking project with your toddler by squeezing your own orange juice, making fruit salad (put your toddler in charge of dropping blueberries or pre-sliced fruit into the bowl) or by making a special drink together (blend yogurt with fruits like strawberries, blueberries, and/or bananas).



Fun with Bubbles

- Play "Pop the Bubble" outside. Using the bubble wand and soap, blow bubbles into the air and encourage your child to chase and try and catch them.
- If you are making your own bubble solution, try using one cup of water, two (2) tablespoons of dish soap and one (1) teaspoon of corn syrup.
- You can also create bubble art. Mix about a cup of bubble solution with about one to two tablespoons of washable paint. Hang a piece of paper outside and have your child blow bubbles at the paper. Or, an adult can put a plastic straw into the bubble-paint solution and blow, making lots of bubbles (careful, don't swallow!). Children can then press the paper into the bubbles that are overflowing out of the bowl.

Gardening

- Plant some seeds (carrot or bean seeds often work best) in a square of dirt outside or in a pot to keep inside. This is a fun project for toddlers who love to shovel dirt, pour water, and get messy!
- Watch your seed grow over the next few weeks (remember to water every few days). Have a garden snack when your plant has grown big enough to "harvest"!

Match the Animals

- Cut pictures of animals out of magazines and make sure there are matches (for example, two pictures of horses, two pictures of sheep, etc.).
- Lay the pictures on the floor and see if your child can match the animals that are the same.

Challenges

Toddlers love challenges, especially as they are growing stronger and more coordinated physically. Ask your child:

- Can you lift your leg?
- Can you touch your hands to your knees?

Using the names of their body parts in context helps them learn and gives them a chance to show you all they can do.



Playing Outdoors

You can play games outside by turning a sprinkler/hose on (keep the spray low) or filling a bucket with water. Then ask your toddler:

- Can you put your foot in the water?
- Can you put your hand in the water?
- Can you jump your whole body through/in the water?



Hand and Footprint

- Trace your child's hand or foot onto a piece of paper.
- Let your child colour in or decorate the tracing.
- Then trace your hand or foot and ask your child to decorate it.

Other Ideas for Toddlers

- Kick, roll, or toss a ball back and forth.
- Dig in the dirt (don't forget buckets, bowls, measuring cups, spoons, gardening tools, whatever you have).
- Play with sidewalk chalk: draw pictures, trace one another's outline, and more.
- Paint with water. Fill a cup with water and give your child a brush to "paint" the sidewalk, door, etc.
- Play "I'm going to catch you."

For Your Pre-schooler – (2.5 to 4 years)

Cardboard Face Art

Cut out pieces of cardboard to make faces with different layers and paint it.



Can You Spot It? I Spy with My Little Eye

- Look at everyday objects in your environment (e.g. your living room, the park, the bus), describe an object and give your child hints about it.
- Then ask your child to guess what it is (e.g. "I spy with my little eye something that is BLUE. Can you find it?").
- Have your child pick an object they can see and ask them to give you clues to find it.

Mirror, Mirror



- Hold up a mirror so that you and your child can see each other. Begin making different expressions such as happy, sad, or scared.
- Ask your child to first copy the expressions.
- Then, ask them to tell you which emotions you were showing.
- Start with simple expressions including happy and sad. Once your child knows the game, ask them to go first and choose their own emotions.

Play, Care, Share

- Give your child different objects, such as pots and pans, crayons, markers, coloured paper, and ask your child to divide the supplies in piles for several people to use.
- Show your child how you would share with others. For example, once your child starts drawing and colouring, ask them, "May I use your...". Look at their reaction, and reply by saying, "Thank you for sharing your... with me". Make sure your child takes turns, sharing the supplies with you.
- You can do this with toys, snacks and books. Snack time can also be used to encourage sharing.

Sink or Float

- While on a walk, pick up different items such as leaves, rocks, twigs, and have your child try to guess if they will sink or float.
- Fill a small tub or big bowl with water and add the items to the water.

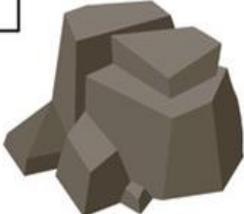
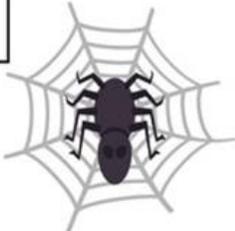
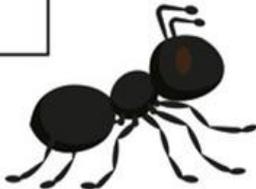
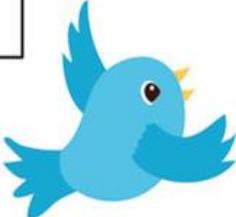
Scavenger Hunt

- Prepare a list and draw items your child needs to find while at home or on a walk.
- You can add to the fun by asking your child to draw or take a picture of each item.
- Collect the items in an egg carton or a container.

Animal Friends

- This game can be played indoors or outdoors. With your child, pick an animal you want to imitate.
- You could move your arms like a bird while flying around the backyard, hop on all fours like a frog from lily pad to lily pad (i.e., cushion to cushion or pillow to pillow on the floor), or get down on your hands and knees pretending to walk like a cat while saying, "meow".

NATURE SCAVENGER HUNT

<input type="checkbox"/>  leaf	<input type="checkbox"/>  rock	<input type="checkbox"/>  flower	<input type="checkbox"/>  spider
<input type="checkbox"/>  squirrel	<input type="checkbox"/>  butterfly	<input type="checkbox"/>  twig	<input type="checkbox"/>  worm
<input type="checkbox"/>  snail	<input type="checkbox"/>  mushroom	<input type="checkbox"/>  ant	<input type="checkbox"/>  tree
<input type="checkbox"/>  bee	<input type="checkbox"/>  bird	<input type="checkbox"/>  tree stump	<input type="checkbox"/>  nest

GLAMAMOM.COM

KIDS 7 MINUTE HIIT WORK OUT FOR SELF-REGULATION

Set an interval timer and complete each animal movement for 45 seconds, with 15 seconds of rest in between. Do as many as you can!



FROG JUMPS

Hop, hop, back and forth like a frog



BEAR WALK

Hands & feet on the floor, hips high - walk left and right



GORILLA SHUFFLE

Sink into a low sumo squat, with hands on the floor, shuffle around the room.



STARFISH JUMPS

Jumping jacks as fast as you can, with arms and legs spread wide.



CHEETAH RUN

Run in place, as FAST as you can! Just like the fastest animal in the Sahara.



CRAB CRAWL

Sit and place your palms flat on the floor behind you near your hips. Lift up off the ground and crawl.



ELEPHANT STOMPS

March in place lifting your knees as high as you can and stomping the ground as hard as you can!

RAISING AN EXTRAORDINARY PERSON
[HTTPS://HES-EXTRAORDINARY.COM](https://hes-extraordinary.com)

For Your Kindergartener – (4 to 6 years)

Real Work

One of the favorite types of play for children is helping you with “real” work. These tasks may take a bit longer with our toddlers, but it’s fun for them and teaches the value of cooperation. Think about whether your toddler can help with:

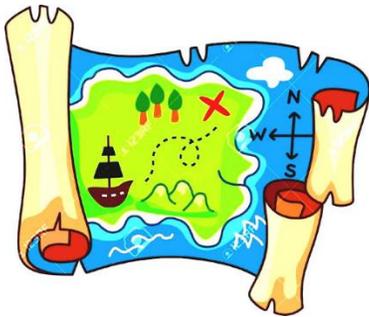
- Meal preparation
- Setting the table
- Sorting or putting away laundry
- Cleaning up (for example, putting shoes in the closet)
- Putting new toilet paper rolls in the bathroom



A Tracing Adventure

- Place an object on a piece of paper and ask your child to draw around the bottom of objects with a pencil or crayon.
- Ask your child to pick different shapes to trace around.
- Colour the shapes to create original art.

Map It!



- Ask your child about their favourite places and talk about what makes this place so great.
- Using paper and crayons, ask your child to draw a map to their favourite place.
- Take your child on a walk or a drive to help them draw out the destination on their map.
- Encourage your child to draw out places they see on the way, for example a restaurant or their school.

Paint a Rock

- Pick a rock outside. Let the kids paint or decorate them.

Pom-Pom Tube Ramp

- Save your toilet paper, paper towel and wrapping paper tubes.
- Using tape, have your child tape the tubes to the wall to create a ramp.
- Ask your child to drop pom poms or balls down the tubes. You can use pom poms or balls that are safe to play with.
- Add bowls under the ends of the ramp to catch the pom poms or balls.



Learning to Measure

- Using everyday items, teach your child to measure. Use things of different sizes and shapes. For example, measure how many "Legos tall" the couch is or how many "blocks wide" the refrigerator is.
- Use the same items to measure different things so you can talk about what things are bigger and smaller using the items.
- Write down the results of their measurements to compare objects.



Trading Places

- Think of a person and a scenario. Consider scenarios your child is familiar with – going to school, visiting family, cooking, playing with friends.
- You suggest to your child, "Let's play Trading Places. At school the adult is the teacher, and the children are the students. Let's switch places! You can be the teacher and I will be the student".
- Take direction from your child and ask questions when you play the game. For example: Ask, "how do you think the teacher feels when the kids aren't listening?"

My Hands Can Say

- Talk to your child about when they felt different emotions or temperatures (i.e., tired, excited, scared, or happy).
- Ask your child to show you, using only their hands, how they would express the following: Hello! - Come here - Go away - Naughty, naughty - I'm hot - I'm scared - Stop - I'm angry - I'm cold - Goodbye – Yay!
- After your child does the movement, encourage them to then describe their movement for each emotion or expression: "I wave my hand to say goodbye." "I wrap my arms around me when I'm cold."
- Use this activity as an opportunity to discuss more challenging emotions, such as anger and fear. This can help your child learn to express a range of feelings.



Going on a Rhyme Hunt

- Let your child know that you are going on a rhyme hunt! Walk around your house and pick an object like a sock. For example, "I see a sock! Can you think of a word that rhymes with sock?" An example might be clock or dock.
- You can go on a rhyme hunt around your house, outside, or even in places like the grocery store! Don't be surprised if your child invents their own funny words to try and rhyme with objects. Try to keep a good balance between real words and silly ones to keep things fun!

Nature Walk

- Spend some time outside and collect objects such as leaves, sticks, stones, pine cones etc.
- Play a sorting game with your child, and encourage them to sort objects by type, colour, or size.
- Use a divided container or egg carton to sort objects.

Hopscotch

- Draw a hopscotch on the sidewalk using chalk.
- You can also create one indoors using painter's tape.

How to Talk to Your Child About Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by everything you're hearing about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) right now. It's also understandable if your children are feeling anxious, too. Children might find it difficult to understand what they are seeing online or on TV – or hearing from other people. They can feel anxious, stressed and sad. Having an open, supportive discussion with your children can help them understand, cope and even make a positive contribution for others.

1. Ask open questions and listen

Invite your child to talk about the issue. Find out how much they already know. If they are very young and haven't already heard about COVID-19, you may not need to discuss it with them. In that case, remind them about good hygiene practices without talking about the disease and scaring them.

Make sure you are in a safe environment and allow your child to talk freely. Drawing, stories and other activities may help to open up a discussion.

Most importantly, don't minimize or avoid their concerns. Be sure to tell them you understand their feelings and assure them that it's natural to feel scared about these things. Show that you're listening by giving them your full attention. Make sure they understand that they can talk to you any time.

2. Be honest: explain the truth in a child-friendly way

Children have a right to truthful information about what's going on in the world. Use simple and reassuring language, watch their reactions, and be sensitive how they are feeling.

If you can't answer their questions, don't guess. Use it as an opportunity to look for answers together.

3. Show them how to protect themselves and their friends

One of the best ways to keep children safe from coronavirus and other diseases is to encourage regular handwashing. It doesn't need to be a scary conversation.

You can also show children how to cover a cough or a sneeze with their elbow, explain that it's best not to get too close to people who have those symptoms. Ask them to tell you if they start to feel like they have a fever, cough or are having difficulty breathing.

4. Reassure them

When we're seeing lots of troubling images on TV or online, it can sometimes feel like the crisis is all around us. Children may not distinguish between images on screen and their own personal reality, and they may believe they're in imminent danger. You can help your children deal with the stress by helping them play and relax. Keep regular routines and schedules as much as possible, especially before they go to sleep, or help create new routines in a new environment.

If your child does feel unwell, explain that they must stay at home or at the hospital because it is safer for them and their friends. Reassure them that you know it is hard (maybe scary or even boring) at times, but that following the rules will help keep everyone safe.

5. Check if they are experiencing or spreading stigma

Check that your children are not experiencing or contributing to racial discrimination. Explain that coronavirus has nothing to do with what someone looks like, where they are from or what language they speak.

6. Look for the helpers

It's important for children to know that people are helping each other with acts of kindness and generosity. Share stories of health workers, scientists and young people, for example, who are working to stop the outbreak and keep the community safe. It can be a big comfort to know that compassionate people are taking action.

7. Take care of yourself

You'll be able to help your kids better if you're coping, too. Children will notice your own response to the news, so it helps them to know you're calm and in control.

If you're feeling anxious or upset, take time for yourself and reach out to other family, friends and trusted people in your community. Make some time to do things that help you relax.

8. Close conversations with care

It's important to know that we're not leaving children in a state of distress. When you talk with them, try to see if they are feeling anxious by watching their body language, listening to their tone of voice and watching how they are breathing.

Remind your children that they can have other difficult conversations with you at any time. Remind them that you care, you're listening and that you're there for them if they are feeling worried.

Useful Telephone Numbers

Toronto Public Health Hotline

8:30 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Call if you have questions about COVID-19. Translation is available in multiple languages.

Telephone: 416-338-7600

TTY: 416-392-0658

311

Call if you have questions about City services.

Telephone: 311

TTY: 416-338-0889

Outside City limits: 416-392-2489

Telehealth Ontario

Call if you develop COVID-19 symptoms.

Telephone: 1-866-797-0000

Your EarlyON Centre

Mental Health Support

Mental Health T.O.

9 a.m. – 7 p.m.; Monday to Friday

Single access number for child, youth and family counselling (by phone and video). No fee or appointment.

1-866-585-6486

<https://www.whatsupwalkin.ca/>

Kids Help Phone

24/7, national support service. Offers professional counselling, information and referrals and volunteer-led, text-based support to young people in both English and French.

1-800-668-6868

OR Text CONNECT to 686868

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

Gerstein Crisis Centre

24-hour community-based crisis services for adults 16+ in the City of Toronto who are dealing with mental health, concurrent, or substance use issues and are currently in crisis.

416-929-5200

<http://gersteincentre.org/our-crisis-services/>

Sick Kids - COVID-19 Learning Hub

Resources on COVID-19 and how to help you cope. There are resources on how to support your child's mental health and general wellbeing through physical activity, sleep, nutrition and learning.

<https://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/COVID-19>

Visit <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-protect-yourself-others/covid-19-mental-health-resources/> for a longer list of resources, including cultural-specific supports.

City of Toronto Links

City of Toronto EarlyON Page

<https://www.toronto.ca/earlyon>

EarlyON Child and Family Centres offer free programs to parents/caregivers and their children from birth to six years of age. These centres welcome all families to participate in quality programs that

- help strengthen adult-child relationships,
- support parent education, and
- foster healthy child development.

Stay, Play & Learn at Home Page

Free, high-quality recreation, active living, arts and culture activities for all ages to enjoy while staying, playing, and learning at home. Sort by Audience for different target age groups – many activities are for Everyone. Check back for updates and additions to this list.

<https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-protect-yourself-others/covid-19-reduce-virus-spread/covid-19-stay-play-learn-at-home/>

References

<https://playandlearn.healthhq.ca>

<https://www.facebook.com/ladysmithwaterfrontgallery/>

<https://busytoddler.com/2020/03/pom-pom-tube-ramp/>

https://hes-extraordinary.com/improve-emotional-regulation-just-7-minutes-per-day?fbclid=IwAR08xB9WpvGwZc0MIS-5ww-HAKeLyw66wxjsOa97y6TiM9M88yUkjB_oZdo

<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-talk-your-child-about-coronavirus-covid-19>