



COVID-19 (Coronavirus): Advice for Young People while Schools are Closed

Stay Responsible & Informed Stay Active & Connected Stay Positive & Calm

The Government has made a decision to close all schools in Ireland in order to slow down the spread of the Covid-19 virus in Ireland and keep as many people as possible safe and well. We have not been in this situation before, so this is new to us all, but if we follow the right advice we will get through this, and in time we will be proud of how we responded, working together to support our country. You have a part to play in this. Some of you may be ready to take on the challenge of social/physical distancing and doing schoolwork at home, some of you may be bored and fed up and others may be feeling worried or anxious about what these changes may mean. We are all adjusting and adapting. When trying to think about how you can support yourself, your family, your community and your country in the coming weeks, remember these three key messages:

Stay Responsible & Informed Stay Active & Connected Stay Positive & Calm

1. Stay Responsible & Informed:

- Follow the HSE advice on their website (see link at end) on protecting yourself, practicing social/physical distancing and on ways to avoid spreading the virus.
- Keep up-to-date with information posted on the Department of Education & Skills' Twitter account (see link at end).
- Without the facts, we may believe rumours and imagine situations far worse than reality. Stick to reliable, trustworthy sources of information such as the HSE, the Department of Health, the Department of Education and Skills, the World Health Organisation (see links at end) and trustworthy mainstream news sources, such as RTE.



- Take breaks from the news and social media as this makes us less vulnerable to ‘fake news’ and limits our exposure to unhelpful or inaccurate information.
- Remember that the Government is working hard to ensure that people throughout the country stay healthy and safe.
- Remember, too, that not everyone will get the virus and the vast majority who get it will recover fully. At times like this we all need to support each other:
 - Be kind and look out for each other.
 - Remember no individual or group is ‘responsible’ for the virus.
 - Making negative comments about others in relation to the virus is not helpful, it’s important to challenge your friends and family if they are doing this.
 - If people you know get the virus remember that it’s not their fault. They have been unlucky and need our support.

2. Stay Active & Connected

Routines and schedules are the key to getting through this new phase of our lives. Making our days structured and predictable will help us feel secure and reassured. Schools have closed and this has changed our regular daily routines. During this time of Covid-19 let’s create new routines. Keeping busy, having a sense of purpose and feeling in control of our time is very important.

You can help yourself get through this time by creating a **Plan for the Day**, every evening for the day ahead (see link at end).



Following your normal school day can be your guide. Don't forget to discuss your plan with your family to make sure that your scheduling of mealtimes, showering, computer time etc. works for everyone in the house. When you are creating your plan think about the following:

- **Include some basic daily activities:** Sleep is good for your health and wellbeing so it's important to get plenty of sleep - eight to twelve hours is recommended for young people. Leaving your phone/laptop/tablet outside of your bedroom will help you to get a good night's sleep. It's also important to eat healthily, to drink lots of water and to take care of personal hygiene. Aim to include sleep, taking exercise, showering and getting dressed into your daily routine.
- **Include some physical activity & housework:**
 - Going for a walk or run/doing weights/jumping on a trampoline/ following an exercise routine on line or by using an App
 - Tidying your room (make your bed/keep your space clean and tidy)
 - Helping with the housework (empty and load the dishwasher/mow the lawn/wash the car/vacuum/ help with the shopping/with cooking/with washing & ironing)
- **Include some social activity:**
 - We all find it hard to be away from our friends and to practice physical/social distancing. Use technology to stay in touch. If you happen to meet a friend, remember to stay **two metres apart**.
 - If you have relatives, family or neighbours who may be lonely or who live alone, why not give them a ring? Remember in particular older relatives.
 - Reconnect with your family. Find similar interests and plan to watch TV together, play board games/make a jigsaw or help with the housework together. Maybe you can help a younger brother or sister with their schoolwork.
- **Include enjoyable and creative activities:**
 - Try something new. Use YouTube to take up a new



- hobby.
 - Do a crossword, read, draw, paint, write or listen to music.
 - Capture each day by documenting it through writing, recording or photography. Keep a journal/diary of this time. It might be something that you will really value in the future.
 - Write/email a letter to a friend or relative or elderly neighbour.
 - Watch a favourite TV programme.
 - Share and enjoy fun TikToks with friends.
 - Prepare a meal. Bake a cake.
- **Include schoolwork**
 - It is important that your new routine on weekdays mirrors the normal school day, as much as possible. One option may be to follow the order of subjects as they appear on your usual school timetable. Another option may be to take a short break after what is the usual length of a class period in your school.
 - It is important that you make time each day to complete some schoolwork. Keep a log of what you have worked on each day.
 - Some schools are using technology to support students with their schoolwork. If your school is doing this, remember to check the school website and your email regularly.
 - Remember it is often hard to motivate yourself and stay focused when working alone at home. This is normal. Taking regular breaks and rewarding yourself is key to staying motivated.

3. Stay Positive & Calm

Over the next few weeks you may have lots of different feelings. It may all feel a bit unreal. We may feel anxious, sad, afraid, fed up, angry, shocked or even numb. We may feel nothing at all. This is all ok and these are all normal and healthy reactions to stressful situations, such as the Covid-19 outbreak. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to feel. If our feelings and reactions seem different from those of our friends, remember that everyone reacts differently. There are things we can do, to help, such as:



- Talk to family and friends about your feelings. Sharing our thoughts or worries with others really does help.
- Remember that there are a lot of rumours and ‘fake news’ going around at the moment. If you are worried about them, talk to an adult or parent.
- Get your information from a reliable source.
- Continually talking about Covid-19 or watching constant updates on it can increase your anxiety. Try to limit accessing information on the internet/ television/social media that might be upsetting to you.
- Covid-19 will pass and life will get back to normal.
- Look at this break from your normal routine as a time to pay attention to yourself and make a special effort to take care of yourself. Try to get some extra sleep, eat nutritious foods and get some exercise, even if it is just a walk.
- Practice some relaxation techniques (see link at end).
- Do something you enjoy. Think about something that makes you feel good, then make it happen – like listening to music, going for walks, doing an exercise routine, watching a funny movie. Remember laughter is good medicine!

Check out these hyperlinks:

- [Plan for the Day](#)
- [Relaxation Techniques](#)

Check out these websites, this list is not exhaustive:

- [HSE](#)
- [Social/physical distancing](#)
- https://twitter.com/@Education_Ire
- [Department of Health](#)
- [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#)
- www.spunout.ie
- www.youth.ie
- www.jigsawonline.ie
- [Little Things Campaign](#)