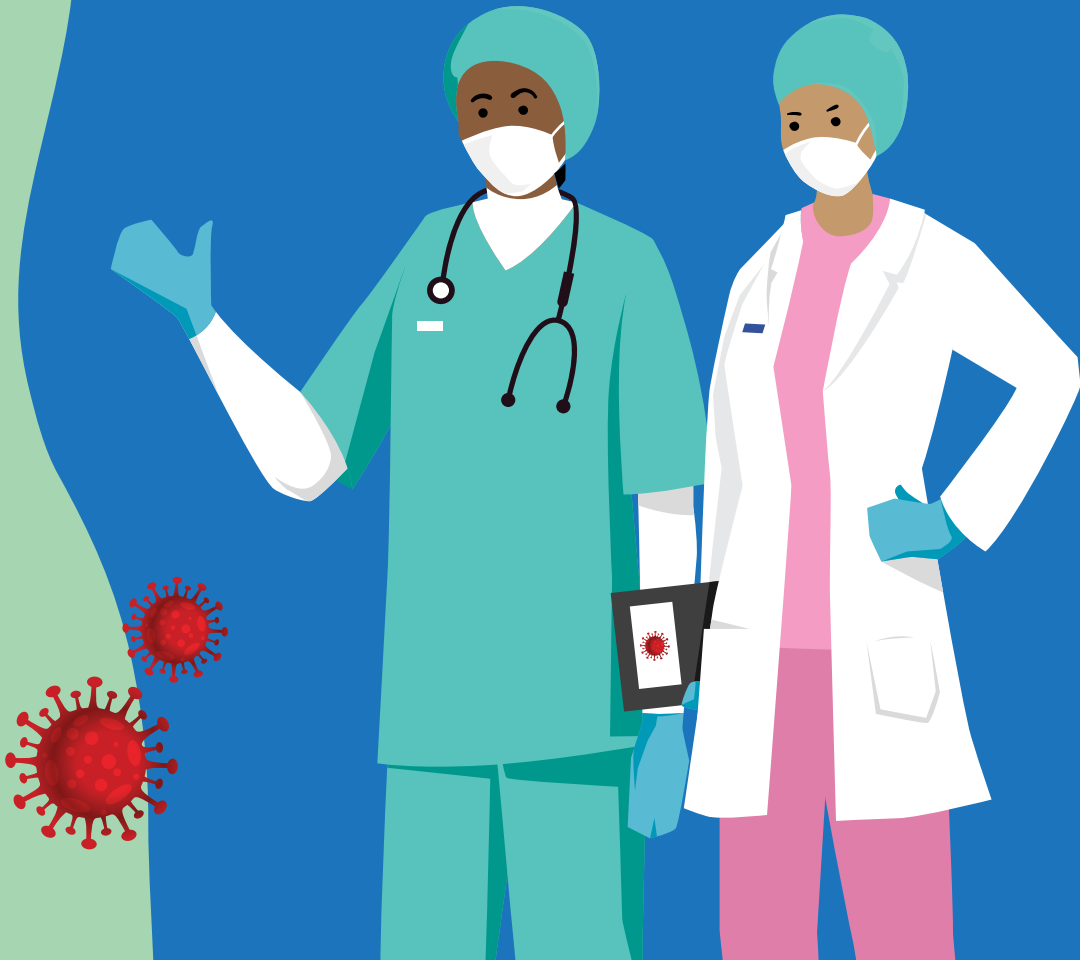


**COVID-19**

# Self-Care for Health Care Workers



**PAHO**



Pan American  
Health  
Organization



World Health  
Organization  
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE AMERICAS

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# Introduction

This booklet provides information on self-care tips for the health workers audience. Health workers are family members and often caregivers, community leaders and health care providers. As such, they can be exposed to hazards that may put them at risk for infection.

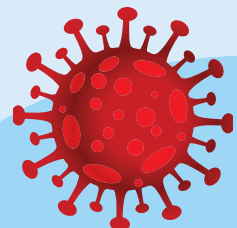


As health workers, it is important to also take some responsibility for your own safety and adhere to recommendations in your national guidelines relating to COVID-19.

This self-care booklet addresses the myriad of settings that may influence the health worker:

- Staying safe and healthy at the workplace.
- Caring for your body.
- Caring for your mind.

Please note that the tips are of a general nature and practices may differ depending upon your country's context.



# Staying safe and healthy at the workplace

**Perform checks upon arrival at work**

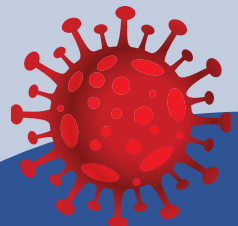
**Follow Standard Precautions**

**Keep your hands clean**

**Monitoring your health**

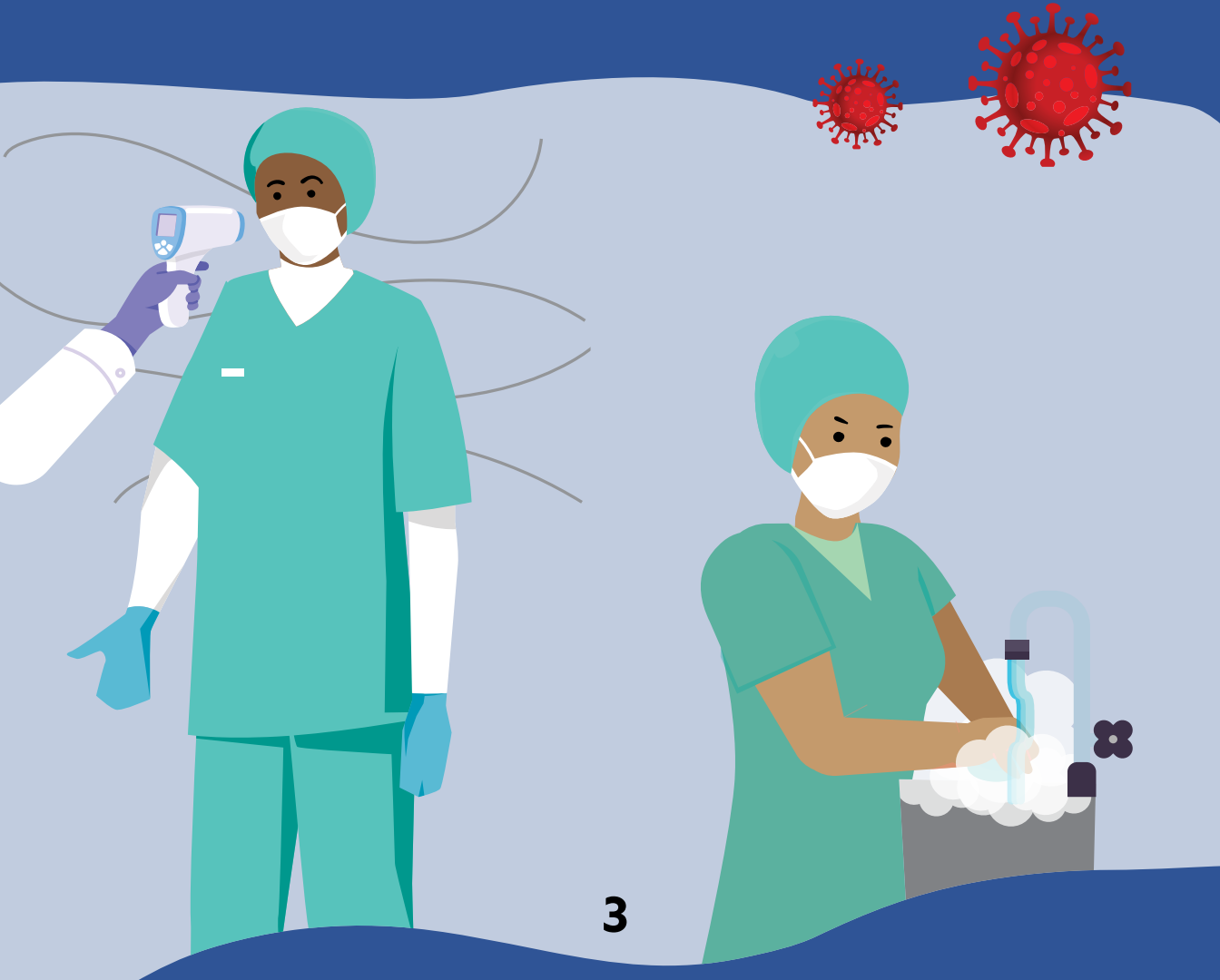
**What if I am exposed to COVID-19 at the workplace?**

**How to leave coronavirus behind when you return home**



# Perform checks on arrival at work

- Screening for all staff for respiratory illness and/or fever prior to entry.
- Hands are washed and sanitized upon entry, prior to commencement of work duties.
- Use of surgical mask following local regulation.



# Follow standard precautions

As health workers, you must comply to the following standard precautions:

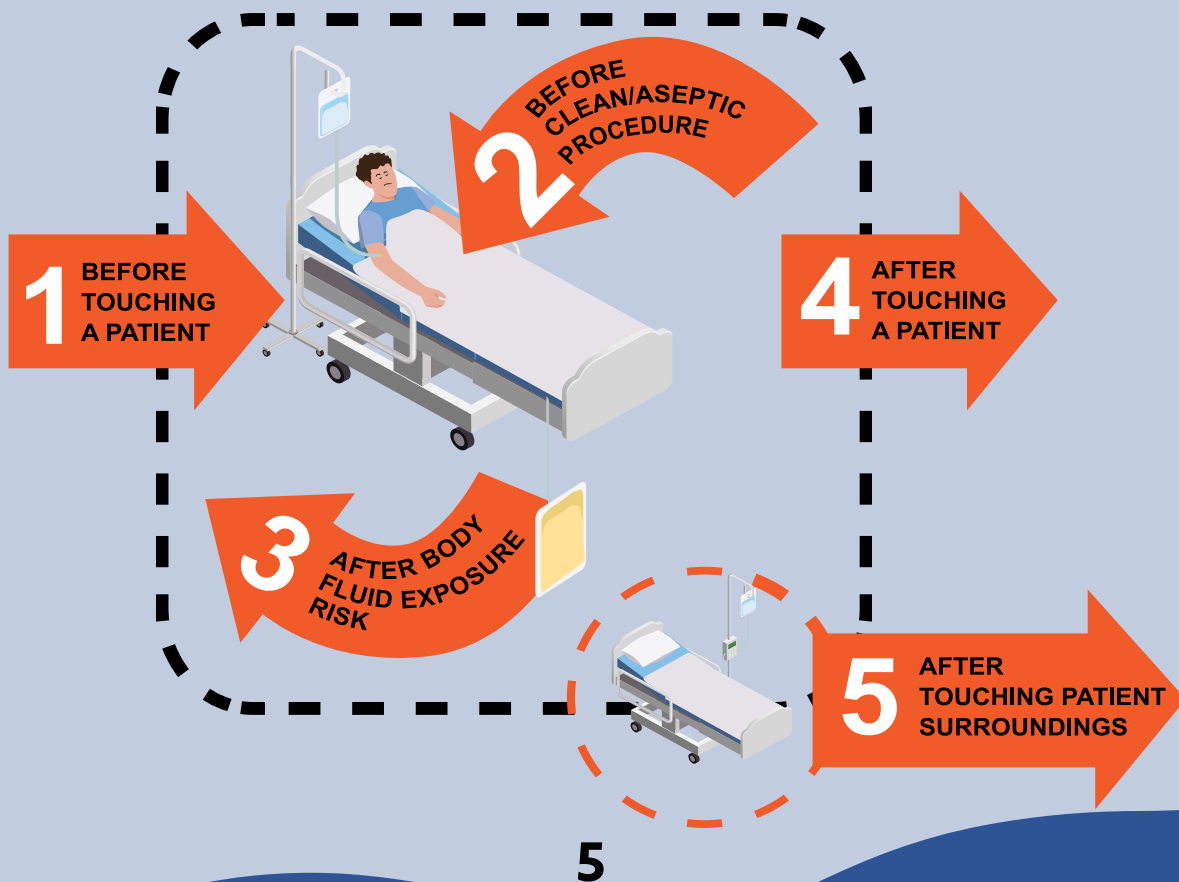
- Always perform hand hygiene when caring for patients.
- Rational and proper use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Safe handling of sharps.
- Use of sterile medical equipment for critical procedures.
- Keep the hospital environment clean.
- Proper management of hospital waste.



# Keep your hands clean

Always apply WHO's "*My five moments of Hand Hygiene*" approach:

1. Before touching a patient;
2. Before any clean or aseptic procedure is performed;
3. After exposure to body fluid;
4. After touching a patient;
5. And after touching a patient's surrounding.



# Monitoring your health

All HCW should check their temperatures at least twice a day and check if any sign or symptoms of respiratory illness appears.

It is highly recommended that a logbook be kept, where entries and notes on the daily checks can be recorded during all the time frame that you are working in a hospital with cases of COVID-19. This includes the 14 days you cease to work with COVID-19 patients even without any unreported exposure or accident.





# What is self-monitoring?

Monitoring, by health workers themselves, of respiratory signs and symptoms, as well as fever, with active reporting to the health authorities or to the hospital's occupational health authorities regarding their health status or following local regulations.

## What is active monitoring?

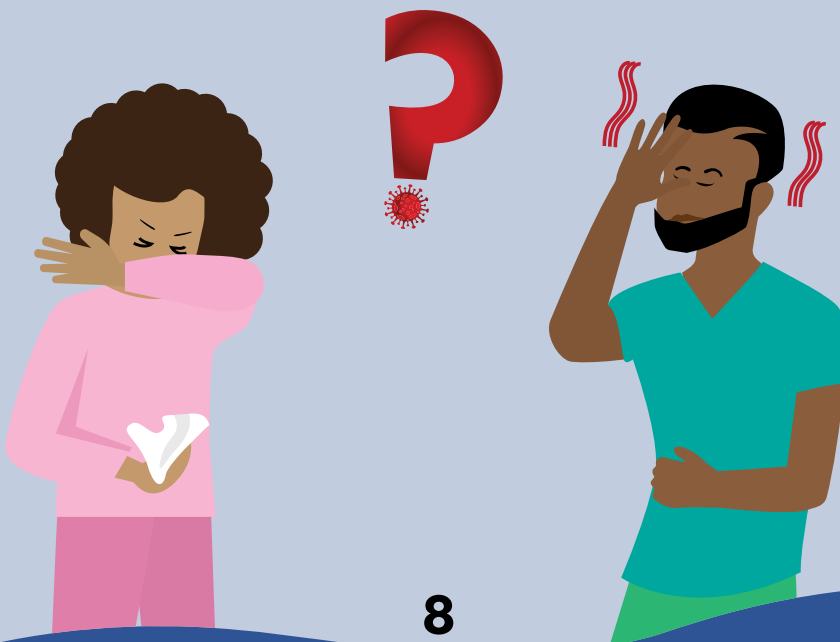
Health authorities or to the hospital's occupational health authorities call upon to check your health status or come personally to check on it.

Name of the exposed professional															
Telephone															
Email															
Health institution															
Work unit in the institution															
Profession/employment															
Date of last exposure															
		Symptoms (mark all that apply)													
Says since last exposure	Date	Time	Temperature	Temperature not taken	Cough	Sore throat	Difficulty breathing	Chills	Rummy nose	Muscle pain	Abdominal pain	Nausea or vomiting	Diarhea	None	Other
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# What do I do if I have symptoms of respiratory illness and fever?

All health facilities should have guidelines or protocols to facilitate self-monitoring for fever or any respiratory illnesses, on a daily basis. If ill, stop working immediately, report immediately to your supervisor, health professional and seek psychological support.

Test for COVID-19. If positive, case management will be conducted. If negative, investigation for other respiratory etiologies will commence.



Any of the following respiratory signs and symptoms may occur:

- Cough (with or without sputum production);
- Difficulty breathing;
- Non-specific symptoms: fatigue, loss of appetite, malaise, muscle pain, sore throat, shortness of breath, stuffy nose or headache;
- On rare occasions: diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting;
- Cases of loss of smell were described.



# What if I am exposed to COVID-19 at the workplace?

You may be exposed in the workplace through the following scenarios:

- Routine COVID duty with suspected or confirmed patients.
- COVID positive patient previously unsuspected and test positive in hospital.
- Suspected or confirmed COVID positive colleague regardless of infection source.

If exposed at the workplace, immediately report to your supervisor and complete the facility's risk assessment questionnaire. Seek psychological support.



# “Low risk” or “high risk” exposure?

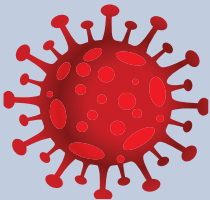
## Low risk exposure in health services



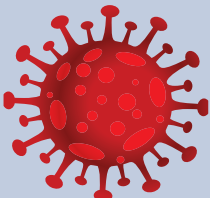
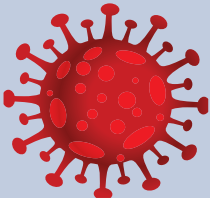
Providing direct care to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, following recommendations for use of PPE in different clinical activities.



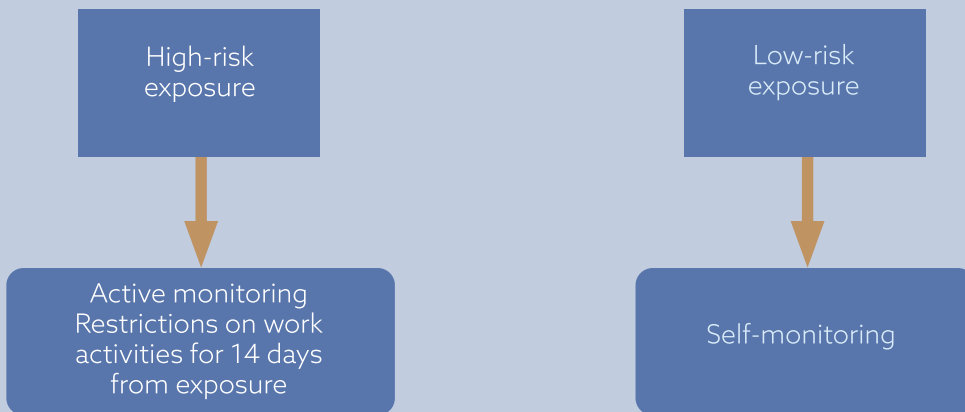
## High risk exposure in health services



Close contact with a case of COVID-19 in the community or in the home; providing direct care to a COVID-19 patient (physical examination, nursing care, carrying out AGPs, airway sampling) or contact with bodily fluids from COVID-19 cases or with a contaminated environment without proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE), or not performing hand hygiene when providing patient care.



# What do I do if I am classified as “low risk” or “high risk”?



Exposure risk	Health status	Actions	
		Sick leave from work	Surveillance / Monitoring of signs and symptoms
Health worker with low-risk exposure in health facilities	Asymptomatic	Not indicated.	Monitor appearance of respiratory symptoms and/or fever; self-monitoring. Seek medical care if signs and symptoms appear. Report to supervisor.
Health worker with high-risk exposure to a COVID-19 patient in the health service.	Asymptomatic	Indicated. Stop working for 14 days from last exposure.	Monitor appearance of respiratory symptoms or fever. Active monitoring. Screen if signs and symptoms appear. Home quarantine. (b)
Health worker is a contact of someone with confirmed COVID-19 at home	Asymptomatic	Indicated. Stop working for 14 days from last exposure.	Monitor appearance of respiratory symptoms or fever. Active monitoring. Screen if signs and symptoms appear. Home quarantine.
Health worker with low- or high-risk exposure in health facilities or at home	Symptomatic	Indicated. Stop working until remission of symptoms and two negative PCRs 24 hours apart. If PCR testing is not available, 7 days after remission of symptoms. (b)	Clinical case management (c) according to local protocols. (a)

# How to leave coronavirus behind when you return home

If possible, bathe and change into clean clothes upon leaving work to go home.

Put dirty clothes into a bag for soiled clothes and keep there until laundry.

Keep your street clothes and shoes near to the door. Do not enter your house with dirty shoes.

If it is not possible to bathe, wash hands with hand sanitizer after removing work clothes and before handling clean clothes.

Shower before interacting with your family.

If possible, you may choose to isolate in a separate bathroom.



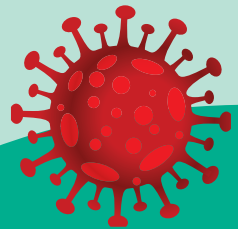
# Caring for your body

**Physical activity**

**Healthy diet**

**Are you living with or affected by NCDs?**

**Going safely outside**





# Physical Activity

Take a short break from sitting by doing 3-4 minutes of light intensity physical movement, such as walking or stretching.

All adults should do at least **150 minutes** of moderate-intensity physical activity, or at least **75 minutes** of vigorous-intensity physical activity throughout the week.



# Healthy Diet

Eat a variety of food, including fruits and vegetables.

Choose a mix of wholegrains.

Limit salt to one teaspoon a day.

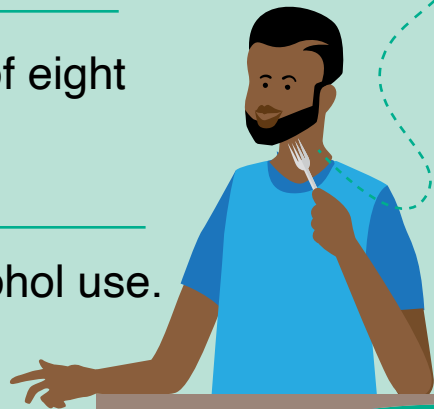
Eat moderate amounts of fats and oils.

Replace butter, ghee and lard with healthier fats like olive, soy, sunflower or corn oil when cooking.

Limit intake of sweets and sugary drinks.

Stay hydrated: Drink a minimum of eight 8-oz glasses of water per day.

Avoid hazardous and harmful alcohol use.



# Are you living with or affected by NCDs?

- 1 Continue to take your medication and follow medical advice.
- 2 Continue to monitor your condition and symptoms on a regular basis. E.g. trace your Peak Flow, measure Glucose and Blood Pressure levels.
- 3 Secure a one-month supply of your medication or longer if possible.
- 4 Keep a distance of at least one metre from people with a cough, cold or flu.
- 5 Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- 6 Quit smoking and avoid using coping strategies involving alcohol or drugs.
- 7 Safeguard your mental health.
- 8 Remember to eat well and keep active.



# Going outside safely

**Remember, as much as is possible, stay at home.**

Only go outside for food, health reasons or work. If out, practice physical distancing measures and wash hands as soon as you get home.

- Be careful about what you touch.
- Walk with hand sanitizer.
- Keep up physical distancing measures – at least six feet apart from another person.
- Only go outside with people you live with.
- Be mindful of curfew hours and physical requirements in keeping with the laws of the country.

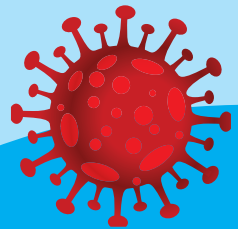


# Caring for your mind

**What can I do to counteract stress?**

**Breathing exercise**

**Healthy parenting**



# What can I do to counteract stress?

- ✓ Ensure sufficient rest and respite during work or between shifts.
- ✓ Eat healthy food.
- ✓ Engage in physical activity.
- ✓ Avoid alcohol, tobacco or other drugs to deal with your emotions.
- ✓ Stay in contact with family, friends and loved ones through digital methods such as WhatsApp.
- ✓ Turn to your colleagues, manager or other trusted persons for social support.
- ✓ Utilize the strategies or skills that you have used in the past to manage times of stress.
- ✓ Have a plan as to where to go and seek help for physical and mental health and psychosocial needs.



# Breathing exercises

If you ever feel stressed, lightheaded or overwhelmed; practice the **4-7-8 breathing exercise**:

- Inhale gently through your nose while counting to 4
- Hold your breath for a 7 count
- Exhale completely through your mouth for an 8 count
- Repeat 3-4 more times



# Healthy Parenting

Here are some ways to help keep your child's online experiences positive and safe:

- Ensure latest antivirus programmes.
- Ensure privacy settings are on.
- Keep webcams covered when not in use.
- Be cautious of free online educational resources.
- Your child should never have to provide a photo or their full name to use the resources.
- Create opportunities for your child to have safe and positive online interaction with friends and family.
- Familiarize yourself with school policies and helplines to report cyberbullying or inappropriate online content.
- Take advantage of digital tools that get your child up and moving, like online





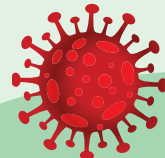
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PAHO/WHO Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean  
Bridgetown, Barbados  
Tel: 1(246) 434-5200, ext 40015

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