How to Spend Time with your Kids and Family During Quarantine

Because schools and workplaces have transitioned to online operations, many families with children have found themselves at home juggling schoolwork, parental duties and little bodies that never seem to stop moving.

Museums, arcades, jump parks and other family friendly locations are also closed. But, with a little planning and creativity the whole family can thrive during an extended period of social distancing and self-quarantine.

Create a routine for work and play

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends maintaining a schedule to provide structure to the day. Routines help keep life organized and limit chaos, especially in times of transition.

“The whole family can benefit from a predictable routine. Routine tells the brain what’s coming and helps children and adults mentally and physically prepare for the next event. It provides a sense of predictability that can reduce stress and anxiety,” says [Laura E. McAleer-Leavey, M.D.](https://riversideonline.com/rmg/search/profile.cfm?npi=1063476513), a family medicine physician at Riverside Primary Care Kiln Creek.

A routine should include time for educational and physical activities as well as general time frames for meals, cleanup, personal hygiene and rest. Here’s a sample schedule you could adapt for your family:

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| DAILY SCHEDULE |

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| 8-9 | Breakfast, clean room, get dressed, brush teeth |
| 9-10 | School work |
| 10-11:30 | Physical activity/outdoor play |
| 11:30-12:30 | Lunch and cleanup |
| 12:30-2:30 | Nap, quiet time, reading (MOM/DAD WORK) |
| 2:30 -3:30 | Electronic educational activities |
| 3:30-4:30 | Physical activity/outdoor play |
| 4:30-5 | Cook and household cleanup |
| 5-6 | Dinner |
| 6-7 | Bath/shower, pajamas, clean rooms, brush teeth |
| 7-8 | Reading, TV, puzzles, family games |

Activities you can do during quarantine

At home and outside, there are many activities that can keep the family active and learning. An extended period at home or in social isolation can serve as an opportunity to learn new skills like roller skating or cooking. Trying new things keeps the mind active and will help everyone in the house avoid boredom.

**Physical activities**

Exercise and physical activity provide both mental and physical health benefits. Don’t put your well-being on hold just because your favorite gym or activity center is closed. Enjoy activities that get the whole family moving.

* Go for a walk or bike ride in the neighborhood
* Play classic movement games such as duck, duck, goose, hide-and-seek and follow-the-leader
* Stream family friendly workouts
* Take a hike in a local park
* Roller-skate or roller-blade
* Go on a scavenger hunt (inside or out)
* Play freeze dance to everyone’s favorite music
* Keep the house tidy with the cleanup game; set a timer and assign everyone a room to speed clean

**Educational activities**

Take this rare opportunity to learn about places around the world, flex your board game muscle and visit famous landmarks, all from the comfort of your own home.

* Take a virtual field trip to regional and international zoos, museums and aquariums
* Visit famous landmarks and interesting regions around the world through books and websites
* Learn about healthy eating and test out new recipes
* Put together age-appropriate puzzles
* Solve word games such as Sudoku, word search and crossword puzzles
* Hold a series of family game nights
* Create a family tree with photos
* Read a book series
* Conduct simple scientific experiments like making homemade slime or determining which objects sink or float in water

**Creative activities**

Support the need for creativity with arts, crafts and games that require imagination.

* Create a physical family tree with photos
* Make shapes and structures with modeling clay or Play-Doh
* Build with blocks and magnetic tiles
* Create a family fort with pillows, sheets and boxes
* Knit, crochet or sew
* Paint pictures
* Play games that require acting like charades or improvisation

Stay informed and adjust for success

The keys to thriving during an extended family quarantine are to be flexible and adapt. You may not get the daily routine down at first and that’s understandable. Test out what works for your family and make small adjustments as needed to arrive at a daily routine that strikes a balance between work and play, structure and flexibility.