



# National Indian Health Board NATIONAL TRIBAL COVID-19 RESPONSE

910 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE | Washington, D.C. 20003 | 202-507-4070 | [www.nihb.org](http://www.nihb.org)

## Talking to Native Youth About COVID-19

### How Should I Talk About COVID-19?

Young Native children, and especially adolescents, most likely hear varying information about COVID-19 from Indigenous social media influencers and peers. It is important to discuss the topic openly and calmly with them. While youth are not as high-risk as other age groups, they can still catch the virus. Youth can also transmit the virus to others even if they themselves are not showing symptoms, so it is very important that youth understand why the temporary disruptions in their day-to-day life they are experiencing are necessary.



#### When discussing COVID-19 with Native youth:

1. Be calm and reassuring.
2. Provide age appropriate information.
3. Make sure they understand what they need to do to help stop the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19.
4. Remind them of the resiliency of Native peoples, and that we will get through this.
5. Provide a safe space for questions, and answer them as honestly as you can without causing more fear.

### Tips to Encourage Native Youth to Stay Safe



#### Be a germ buster!

- Remind Native youth to keep good hygiene practices like frequent hand washing, covering their mouth when sneezing and/or coughing, and trying their best to limit how often they touch their faces.



#### Smart hygiene practices:

- When washing their hands, have them sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice, and remind them frequently to use soap, to ensure they have washed thoroughly.
- Explain covering their mouths as the "vampire cough." When coughing or sneezing, lift up your arm and put your face into your elbow, like a vampire.



#### Too much spare time?

- Do your best to keep a routine for the youth just as you might during time away from home or on a break from school.
- If you find yourself or the youth getting restless, this might be a good opportunity to use some extra time to teach them more about traditional practices like cooking traditional foods, language learning, or prayer.

## Challenges Native Youth Face During COVID-19

- Changes in their routines (e.g., having to physically distance from family, friends, worship community).
- Breaks in continuity of learning (e.g., virtual learning environments, technology access and connectivity issues).
- Breaks in continuity of health care (e.g., missed well-child and immunization visits, limited access to mental, speech, and occupational health services).
- Missed significant life events (e.g., grief of missing celebrations, vacation plans, and/or milestone life events).
- Lost security and safety (e.g., housing and food insecurity, increased exposure to violence and online harms, threat of physical illness and uncertainty for the future).



### Additional Tips for Supporting Native Youth

- Remind them that everyone is working hard to manage the virus.
- Although it may seem difficult, it is important to model calmness. Youth will look to parents and caregivers to gauge how worried they should be, even though it may seem like they just tune you out!
- Show children that it's possible to continue to do what is important to you while practicing healthy behaviors.
- If it becomes necessary to adjust plans, be transparent and direct with your child so that they understand the rationale behind the decision. For example, if you have to postpone travel because of new advice about safe travel, then let your teen know that. Check the CDC travel advisories for up-to-date information. You can add that the trip was postponed because it was not a necessary trip, and that the family will continue to do what is necessary each day.

### Resources for Native Youth

- WeRNative - <https://www.wernative.org/>
- Indian Health Service (IHS) - <https://www.ihs.gov/nativeyouth/resources/>
- Center for Native American Youth (CNAV) - <https://www.cnay.org/>
- National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) - <https://www.ncai.org/native-youth>
- Healthy Native Youth - <https://www.healthynativeyouth.org/>
- Tribal Youth Program - <https://www.tribalyouthprogram.org/>
- Johns Hopkins Center For American Indian Health Our Smallest Warriors, Our Strongest Medicine: Overcoming COVID-19 - <https://caih.jhu.edu/programs/strongmedicine>
- Centers For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) COVID-19 Children's Eagle Book Coloring Storybook - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/tribal/covid19-eagle-story/index.html>



For more information, or to learn more about frequently asked questions, visit the [CDC website](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/groups/families-children.html).  
<https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping/parental-resources/index.html>



Disclaimer: This fact sheet is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$2,000,000 with 100 percent funded by CDC/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by CDC/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

For more information, visit NIHB's National Tribal COVID-19 Response page at [www.nihb.org](http://www.nihb.org)