

COVID-19: Tips and strategies for families

Are you worried about what you would do if you as a parent and caregiver became ill? Many parents have expressed that this is one of their biggest fears. Who would take care of their medically complex child and their siblings? We have also heard many strategies parents have shared with regards to creating their back-up plan. We wanted to share these with you and hope that this may be helpful in creating your own back-up plan.

Here are some tips to consider:

1. As much as possible, make sure that you have adequate supplies in home. For example, 2-3 weeks of medical supplies and medication, food for 2 weeks. Don't forget your own medication, not just your child's. You can write a list of vendors where you order your medical supplies and which pharmacy you obtain your and your child's medication. If you are able to identify a family member or friend who can place the orders or deliver to your house, this will help you not have to leave your home and have all of the supplies that you need.
2. If possible, identify emergency caregivers to care for your child/children. If not already done, provide them with your child's care plan: medication schedule, tracheostomy change, equipment functioning, schedule and routine, feeding schedule. Your emergency caregiver will need your expertise in taking care of your child. Don't forget to inform your care team, example, your nurse care coordinator and your LHIN care coordinator (especially if you are receiving in-home PSW or nursing services), of your back up plan so that they are informed and you can provide consent for your emergency caregiver to reach out to your team if needed (and if you are not available). Your care team cannot speak to anyone other than parents unless they have your consent.
3. Have a binder in your home with all the important information and documents: phone numbers to your child's pediatrician, complex care team, your child's medical SPOC, daily schedules, medication list and schedules, agencies providing services and their contact information and schedule.
4. If possible, try to find a space in your home where you can safely self-isolate in order to prevent contagion to other family members.
5. Taking into account age and development share with your child/children the plan. The unknown is a source of anxiety. Therefore having a plan and discussing as a family helps to reduce some of the anxiety and gives you some control.
6. Stay home, stay safe and be gentle with yourself. Take good care of your mental, emotional and physical health. Eat well, sleep and hydrate as much as possible. Self-care is more important than ever.

At any point, do not hesitate to contact your social worker. They can provide you with support in building a back-up plan and problem solve with you. You are not alone and your team can support you in times of need.

Tipsheet created by Diane Paradis (Complex Care social worker), Amelie Deslauriers (Navigator Program social worker), Alicia Biafore (CSP social worker), Lillian Kitcher and Teresa MacMillan (Parent Navigators) and informed by the many parents who have shared their tips with us. We thank you for your expertise and wisdom.