

# ELF STUDY NEWSLETTER

May 2020



We are with you during challenging times as we face the many impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. The Latrobe Valley community has shown great spirit and resilience in times of adversity and has been called to draw on this strength once again.

Health bodies rely on established procedures such as hand hygiene, cleaning, social isolation and also new emerging methods for COVID-19 specific control. Home isolation, remote learning for school children and social distancing are now part of daily life, as we follow these necessary regulations. The spread and transmission mode of the virus is closely monitored by state Chief Health Officers. Guidelines are regularly reviewed and modified based on specific conditions and patterns seen in countries across the globe, who have experienced the pandemic ahead of Australia. Infection rates for Victoria are thankfully beginning to slow at the time of this publication.

We have included some helpful information for families, particularly with young children in mind. The ELF team wishes all our study families well and that you can stay healthy and happy until we next get to see you in person at the clinic visit.



## ELF Clinics

- ◆ The ELF team will be in touch after health authorities advise it is safe to run our clinic, most likely in 2021.
- ◆ If your child was unable to attend the clinic in 2017, we would love to see you at the next clinic visit.



- ◆ Even if your child attended an appointment at the last clinic in 2017, it is still important to visit the clinic again. This may help us to further support information we have already gathered about possible impacts of the 2014 mine fire, on exposed infants and the unborn. To best do this, we aim to look at blood vessel and lung development over a period of several years, to investigate possible changes as children grow.

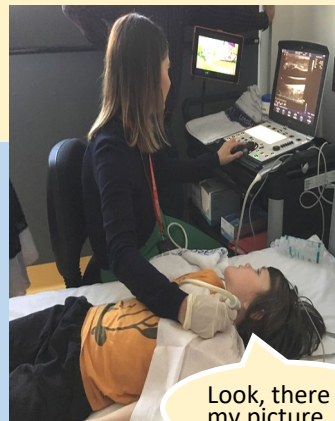
## HAVE YOU MOVED OR CHANGED YOUR CONTACT DETAILS?

Update the ELF Team at [latrobe.elf@utas.edu.au](mailto:latrobe.elf@utas.edu.au) or call 1800 322 102

# More about the clinic...



Some fun breathing games are next



Look, there is my picture



So many Stickers

## What happens at the ELF clinic?



Peppa Pig is on the Ipad



Pick me, pick me



Wow! Look how tall I've grown



I am going to move a cloud



Adventures with funny goggles



Mum is going to watch me blow the cloud away

## Coronavirus

◆ For local COVID-19 updates, regularly refer to the Latrobe City Council website (<https://www.latrobe.vic.gov.au>). Some local services have been cancelled, while other essential services continue to run in line with State Government guidelines.

◆ New or existing health conditions should be monitored by your regular family GP - your clinic will advise the most suitable method of consultation during this time.

◆ For urgent health issues visit your nearest hospital emergency department, (call ahead of time for current advice) or ring for an ambulance if appropriate. If you suspect you have COVID-19 symptoms call the Coronavirus hotline on 1800 675 398 for information on which local GP clinic to attend for assessment or treatment. Additionally public testing may now be available in your local area.

◆ If you or a family member experiences mental health concerns such as anxiety or stress, seek help by reaching out to one of the mental health services listed overleaf or contact your GP for further assistance with severe concerns.

# COVID 19

## Simple answers for children

### **What is the coronavirus?**

A kind of germ that can make people feel sick. Remember how the flu made (someone your child knows) feel. The virus can be a lot like that.

### **How do you catch the virus?**

The virus spreads like the flu, or a cold or cough. If a person who has the virus sneezes or coughs, this is how germs that are inside the body can come out and spread. If they sneeze or cough into a tissue or elbow, this helps keep germs from traveling and making other people sick. Touching your face is a way that the little germs can enter our body, washing our hands makes sure the germs are gone.



## For Parents...

**Ask open questions and listen.** Find out how much your child already knows and follow their lead. If they are particularly young, take the chance to remind them about good hygiene practices without introducing new fears.

**Provide just enough information** without fuelling anxiety, using age-appropriate language.

**Show them how to protect themselves.** Encourage regular handwashing. Sing along with a favourite tune, dance for 20 seconds or imagine that their hands are two octopuses having a wrestle for fun, see over page.

**Use a tissue or their elbow** for a sneeze or cough. Draw a googly-eyed face in the crease of the elbow, to make a 'sneeze and cough eating' pet Elbow Monster.

**Limit viewing news stories** to when children are not in the room to avoid alarm.

**Stick to regular routines** as much as possible, especially at bedtime and when in a new environment; such as home schooling.

**Identify the helpers** in the community, it is important for your child to know that people are helping others with acts of kindness and generosity.

**Look after yourself.** You'll be able to help your kids better if you're coping, too. Children will pick up on your own reactions, it helps them to know you're calm and in control. Take time for yourself to do things that help you to relax.

**Offer reassurance.** Help children cope with stress by making opportunities for play and relaxation when possible. If your child appears distressed, remind them that they can have scary conversations with you at any time. Remind them that you care, you're listening and that you're available whenever they're feeling worried.

**Why can't I hug Grandma or my friends?** Explain that social distancing does not mean that your child or the other people are sick, but that this is a way to keep them both safe and well. It may be impossible to explain this to younger children. Instead of high fives or hugs, create an alternative greeting such as a silly wink, dance step or special hand wave. Use face time or other social media to keep in regular contact.

**Why are some people wearing masks?** Masks are for people who are sick to wear, so that they don't share germs or for doctors and nurses to keep them safe when they are helping people.

**Can you die from Coronavirus?** Most people who have caught the virus have not died, just like with the flu. Some people can easily catch germs that make them very sick, especially if they are very old or already unwell.





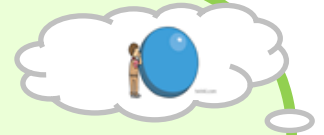
## Some fun things to do at home



- Cook up a storm with simple recipes the whole family can help with
- Have some outdoor fun digging in the garden
- Make up some pot plants to give as welcoming gifts for when you next see grandparents, family or friends
- Wash the family pet or help clean the car

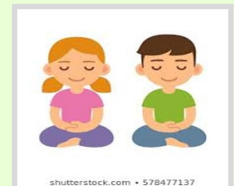


## Guided meditation for children: The Balloon



*This guided meditation brings a visual component to a very simple deep breathing exercise. You can do this standing or seated, or encourage younger children to stand up in a relaxed way. To keep younger children engaged, you can add a little more detail and fun to the exercise. This is a great way to help wind down after home school learning for older children.*

- ◆ Relax your body and start to take a slow, deep breath to fill your belly up with air, as if you're trying to blow up a big balloon in your favourite colour. Expand your belly as much as you can, stretching your arms open and overhead.
- ◆ Slowly let the air out of the balloon (through the nose) as you release breath from the belly.
- ◆ When their balloon is totally full, have them hold their breath at the top, and then you can "pop the balloon" for them (gesture finger to belly) and they can fall down as they exhale. This one will likely elicit giggles and awareness of their breath.
- ◆ Encourage your kids to feel their entire body relax each time they exhale, each time air is slowly being released from the balloon. *For older children you can even make a "hissing" noise to encourage them to slow down the exhale even more, "like letting air out of the balloon."*
- ◆ Continue and repeat for several minutes. Play some calming music (check options for kids on free-to-air tv radio channels, to save on data), scatter some cosy cushions, blankets and books around the room and encourage children to feel comfortable with rest and relaxation.



Adapted from The Chopra Center <https://chopra.com/articles/3-kid-friendly-meditations-your-children-will-love>

## Useful Contacts and References

Coronavirus Hotline Call: 1800 675 398

Latrobe City Council Call: 1300 367 700  
<https://www.latrobe.vic.gov.au>

Victorian Department of Health and Human Services  
<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-daily-update>

Australian Government Department of Health  
<https://www.australia.gov.au>

Lifeline Call: 13 11 14 Crisis Support [lifeline.org.au](https://lifeline.org.au)

Beyond Blue Call: 1300 224636 [beyondblue.org.au](https://beyondblue.org.au)

Facebook: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information  
[https://www.facebook.com/coronavirus\\_info/?page\\_source=bookmark](https://www.facebook.com/coronavirus_info/?page_source=bookmark)

ABC Life: How to talk to kids about coronavirus pandemic  
<https://www.abc.net.au/life/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-coronavirus-covid-19/12084666>

World Health Organisation <https://www.who.int/>

UNICEF <https://www.unicef.org.au>

UNICEF blog: How to talk to your children about coronavirus  
<https://www.unicef.org.au/blog/news-and-insights/march-2020/how-to-talk-to-your-children-about-coronavirus>

The Lancet : Parenting in a time of COVID-19 <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2820%2930736-4>

Harvard Health Blog: How to talk to children about coronavirus  
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/how-to-talk-to-children-about-the-coronavirus-2020030719111>