



Educators need to be teaching Sex Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Here's why:

Students are experiencing profound physical, social, and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the disease has primarily affected physical health, consequences of COVID-19 have also had an impact on sexual, reproductive, and mental health outcomes.

COVID-19 has resulted in countless sexual health clinic closures, creating inaccessibility to contraceptives, STI testing, abortion, and other reproductive services. The decline of accessible sexual and reproductive health services has further reinforced the importance of teaching students about safer sex practices, including how to best protect themselves from STIs. Accordingly, youth who receive sexual health information are at a lower risk for contracting and spreading STIs than those who do not receive this information. Along with safer sex practices, educators must promote services that have remained accessible despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these include the [Centre de Santé des Femmes de Montréal](#), local [Centre Local de Services Communautaires \(CLSC\)](#) and similar walk-in clinics.

Although in-person dating and short-term sexual encounters are currently discouraged, several students will inevitably participate in sexual activity with partners despite the pandemic. The youth population must become informed of best practices regarding sexual encounters to minimize their risk of contracting or transmitting COVID-19. For instance, it is now critical to ask your partners about who they have been in contact with - both sexually and socially. COVID-19 is known to spread through close contact via respiratory secretions. Therefore, wearing masks during sexual activity is recommended to avoid oral transmission. Much like individuals who test positive for STIs, those infected with COVID-19 can experience stigmas that create shame and barriers to open communication among sexual partners. Sexual health education must emphasize transparency and communication between partners in an effort to decrease exposure.





Quarantine and confinement measures have been used as a strategy to reduce disease transmission during the pandemic. This has led to isolation and the increase in negative mental health outcomes for many youths. It is important to cultivate learning environments in which students feel supported and can express their emotions. Educators should be encouraged to facilitate open discussions and check-ins about mental health, self-care, and feelings. Finally, students should be made aware of online mental health resources such as [Kids Help Phone](#).

Equally compelling are the rising rates of domestic and sexual abuse perpetrated by family members during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students require the knowledge and skillset to identify and seek help in abusive relationships. Teachers must inform students about local resources such as [SOS Violence Conjugale](#) or [Crisis Line](#) which provide remote crisis hotlines.



Students who identify as LGBTQ+ may encounter hostility or scrutiny from family members who are not supportive of their gender or sexual orientation. Many community-based safe spaces for LGBTQ+ youth have experienced temporary closure or complete shutdowns due to the financial implications of COVID-19. Now more than ever educators must cultivate inclusive spaces within their classrooms and promote LGBTQ+ organizations that offer online chat, Zoom, and call services such as Montreal's [Alterhéros](#) or [Project 10](#).

The present need for health information is widely acknowledged; yet, there is little information given to young students about how COVID-19 and social distancing measures affect sex and relationships. Sexual health education initiatives become increasingly important when relationships, communities, and health resources are strained. Presently, adolescents are less likely to receive information from trusted sources such as health care professionals. Teachers can fill this gap by addressing the effects of COVID-19 on the lives of students in order to encourage responsibility, safety, and healthy relationships.

