

# Messy play at home



Playing at all ages can be messy and fun. But when you and your child are at home together for a while, it might be more difficult to cope with.

Being messy is a natural part of playing. It involves:

- using all your senses to explore what things look, feel, smell and sound like
- being creative and imaginative
- learning about what things do – for example, what happens when colours mix or how water trickles or how bubbles float
- feeling satisfaction from squishing things together, taking them apart, and making a mess just for the sake of it
- having fun splashing, giggling and tickling.

## Messy play about the coronavirus

During the current situation, your child might use messy play to:

- explore their feelings about germs, viruses and how these are passed from one place or person to another
- create models or images of what they think a virus looks like or how it acts, maybe giving it a personality.

If your child is doing this, you can help by:

- allowing them to play freely, so they can work things out in a way that helps them come to terms with what's happening
- using their play as a starting point for conversations about the virus and its effects.

## Tips for dealing with messy play at home

It can be harder to deal with mess around the house – or to wash and dry clothes – when you are having to stay at home so much. And children may worry about adding stress to the family, too.

The important thing is to try to find a balance that works for your family. Here are some suggestions:

- Let your child know you don't mind them getting wet or a bit messy when they play.
- Keep some old clothes that you're happy for your child to wear when they get messy.
- Involve your child when you're cleaning up and sorting out messy clothes and toys.
- Cover the floor or table with old cloths or newspaper.
- Discuss with your child where it's ok to be messy in your home and where it isn't.
- Remember that bathrooms are usually perfect for messy and wet play.



STAY  
EMOTIONALLY  
HEALTHY



STAY  
PHYSICALLY  
ACTIVE



RELAX AND  
FORGET ABOUT  
WORRIES



MAKE SENSE OF  
NEW EXPERIENCES  
AND CHANGES  
IN THE WORLD



COPE WITH FEELINGS  
THAT ARE DIFFICULT  
OR FRIGHTENING

The *IPA play in crisis* series is designed to offer straightforward advice and suggestions to help you and your child keep playing through the coronavirus pandemic.