

Helping Children Understand Coronavirus (COVID-19)

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As a parent or caregiver, you may be wondering how to talk to your children about COVID-19 (the Coronavirus). It is very important to give them correct information without causing unnecessary fear or anxiety. Here are some points to follow:

- Be calm and reassuring. Children look to adults at times of uncertainty to know how to feel about it. If you are upset or anxious, please take some time to calm down before speaking with them.
- Find out what your children already know. Follow their lead.
- Give children honest and accurate information in language they can understand.
- Use The Center for Disease Control website (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus) if you don't know the answer to their questions.
- Limit your children's access to the news. Too much information can make anxiety worse.
- Avoid blaming any group of people or communities for the virus. Diseases like this can make anyone sick.
- A daily check-in with children may help limit the amount of time spent talking about the virus. Use this time to answer questions and give them new information.

Help your child feel in control

- Let your children know that worrying about safety is your job as a grownup. Their job is to keep the virus from spreading by following safety instructions:
 - Wash hands often and for 20 seconds
 - Keep space between themselves and other people
 - Cough and sneeze into their elbows, not their hands
 - Follow any new directions from doctors and scientists who are learning more every day.

- Tell children about the things people are doing to keep everyone healthy: avoid large groups of people, wash hands, close schools, etc.
- Remind the children that it is not punishment that they cannot play with their friends or do activities they are used to doing.
 - "We need to follow the rules to be safe and keep others safe."
 - "We can work together to make this time fun."

School closings

Schools are closed because of COVID-19. It is important to continue regular daily routines as much as possible for yourself and your children.

- Keep bedtime routines the same, including bedtime and wake times.
- Keep meal times and snack times the same every day.
- Try to plan your routine around your child's typical school day.
 - Reading, math, science, time to play outside, lunch, music time, art, free play, quiet time, etc.
- Schedule time for exercise every day.
 - Outside: Ride bikes or scooters, take a walk/hike, play ball, or other games.
 - Inside: Jumping jacks, obstacle course, or online yoga/ exercise videos. Lots of free things online to help.
- Limit recreational screen time to 2 hours a day or less. Schedule it into the routine so it has a beginning and end time.
- Set goals to stay motivated.



- Be kind to yourself as a parent who has not necessarily been trained or prepared to be home schooling. Look for online support from other homeschool parents if you need this.

Take care of yourself

- Parents and caregivers need breaks too! Schedule time in the day to do something you enjoy.
- Remember to B R E A T H E. Notice your stomach expand as you take in a slow, deep breath. Slowly breathe out all the air through your mouth. Repeat at least 5 times.
- Be positive and gentle with yourself. You can handle difficult situations. This is a stressful time to be a parent. Remind yourself that you are doing the best you can.

More places to find information

- National Public Radio: Just for kids: a comic exploring the new Coronavirus
<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus>
- KidsHealth: Coronavirus (COVID-19): How to talk to your child <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/coronavirus-how-talk-child.html>
- CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention): Talking with children about Coronavirus Disease 2019: Messages for parents, school staff, and others working with children
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html>
- Child Mind Institute: Talking to kids about the Coronavirus
<https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>
- New York Times Parenting: How to talk to kids about Coronavirus https://parenting.nytimes.com/childrens-health/coronavirus-kids-talk?type=roundup&link=intro&te=1&nl=nyt-parenting&emc=edit_ptg_20200229&campaign_id=118&instance_id=16383&segment_id=21752&user_id=1791e079823dbfcf4eebc7c59cd9c9d4®i_id=75306328dit_ptg_20200229