

Talking with Children About the Coronavirus

News of the coronavirus, COVID-19, is everywhere and everyone is talking about it. Children know they can't go to school, hangout with their friends, and that they have to stay home. Parents shouldn't avoid talking about it. Not talking about something can actually make kids worry *more*. Below are some tips to help you when sharing this important information:

Have accurate information

- COVID-19 is the short name for "coronavirus disease 2019." It's a new virus that doctors and scientists are still learning about.
- Recently, this virus is making a lot of people sick. Scientists and doctors think that most people are going to be ok, especially kids, but some people might get pretty sick.
- Doctors and health experts are working hard to help people stay healthy.

Remain calm and reassuring

- Remember that children will react to both what you say and how you say it. They will pick up cues from the conversations you have with them and with others – the suggestion is to be aware your facial expressions and tone of voice.

Avoid language that might blame others or scare your child

- Remember that the viruses can make anyone sick, regardless of a person's race, age, or where they live. Avoid making assumptions about who might have or get COVID-19.

Look at the conversation as an opportunity to convey the facts and set the emotional tone.

- Let them know that it is a virus that is making people sick, and that the most important thing is to wash our hands often (for 20 seconds - as long as it takes to sing the alphabet song), keep our hands off our faces, sneeze into our elbows, throw away tissues when we blow our nose, keep things clean, and stay home away from others.
- Let them know you care about them, that they can ask you questions, and that the family continues to love and take care of each other.

Pay attention to what your child sees or hears on TV, radio, or online.

- Consider reducing and limiting the amount of screen time, especially sites like facebook, twitter, instagram, tiktok, and youtube – too much information can lead to anxiety.
- Talk to your child about how some stories on COVID-19 on the Internet and social media may be based on rumors and inaccurate information.

References:

- [CDC's COVID-19 website https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html)
- [Talking to Children about COVID-19](#)pdf iconexternal icon, developed by the National Association of School Nurses and the National Association of School Psychologists.
- [Helping Children Cope with Emergencies https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/helping-children-cope.html](https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/helping-children-cope.html)
- Child Mind Institute website <https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>