

Tips for talking with children about Coronavirus

Children will inevitably pick up on the concerns and anxiety of others, whether this be through listening and observing what is happening at home or at school. It is important that they can speak to you about their own concerns.

Answer their questions

Do not be afraid to talk about the Coronavirus with children. Given the extensive media coverage, it is not surprising that some children are aware of the virus. Providing opportunities to answer their questions in an honest and age-appropriate way can help reduce any anxiety they may be experiencing.

You can do this by:

- speaking to them about Coronavirus in a calm manner
- asking them what they already know about the virus so you can clarify any misunderstandings they may have
- letting them know that it is normal to experience some anxiety when new and stressful situations arise
- giving them a sense of control by explaining what they can do to stay safe (e.g., wash their hands regularly, stay away from people who are coughing or sneezing)
- not overwhelming them with unnecessary information (e.g., death rates) as this can increase their anxiety
- reassuring them that Coronavirus is less common and severe in children compared to adults
- allowing regular contact (e.g., by phone) with people they may worry about, such as grandparents, to reassure them that they are okay

Talk about how they are feeling

- Explain to your child that it is normal to feel worried about getting sick
- Listen to your child's concerns and reassure them that you are there to help them with whatever may arise in the future
- It is important to model calmness when discussing the Coronavirus with children and not alarm them with any concerns you may have about it
- Children will look to you for cues on how to manage their own worries, so it is important to stay calm and manage your own anxieties before bringing up the subject with them and answering their questions

Limit media exposure It is important to monitor children's exposure to media reports about the Coronavirus as frequent exposure can increase their level of fear and anxiety. Try to be with your child when they are watching,