

Talking to Kids about Coronavirus (COVID-19)

People everywhere are talking about coronavirus (COVID-19) on the news, social media, television commercials and more. Adults aren't the only ones hearing about it, and just like adults, kids may be overwhelmed, stressed, and frightened about what they are hearing. Parents, family members, and other trusted adults can help them understand what they hear in a way that is honest, accurate, and reduces anxiety or fear.

Tips for talking with kids

Remain calm and reassuring. Kids hear not just what you say but how you say it. Use a calm voice and try not to seem worried.

Be available to listen and to talk. Schedule time each day to relax and connect with your children. Make sure they know they can come to you any time they have questions. Talk together about fears, worries and other feelings. Encourage them to call or video chat with friends and family to check on others and stay connected.

Pay attention to what they see or hear on television, radio, or online. Limit what they watch. Point them to age-appropriate content so they don't end up finding news shows or outlets that scare them or have incorrect information. Talk together about what they are hearing and correct any false information.

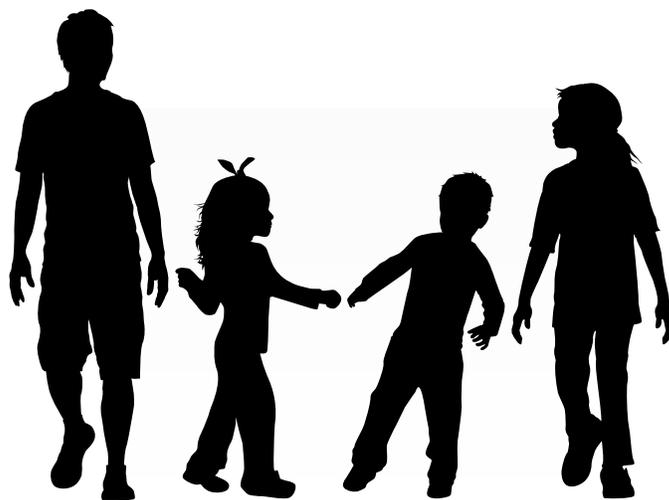
Watch for changes in behavior. This may mean that they are anxious or not coping well. They may have trouble sleeping, complain of headaches or not feeling well, get cranky, be more clingy, or seem distracted. Keep reassuring them, talk to them about their feelings, and try to stick to your normal routines.

Provide facts. Give them honest, direct answers and facts that are appropriate for their age. Explain that some stories on the Internet and social media may be based on rumors and incorrect information.

Give them some control. Tell them what they can do to reduce the spread of germs and keep themselves and others safe.

- Stay home and away from people who are sick.
- Cough or sneeze into their elbow or a tissue, then throw the tissue into the trash.
- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after coughing or sneezing, going to the bathroom, and before eating or making food.

Be a good role model. When you show empathy and support to those who are sick, they will too. Pay attention to your own healthy habits, technology use and mental health. Show them that taking a break and protecting your own mental health is important. Let your kids know that it's normal to feel worried and stressed out sometimes. Share with them how you deal with stress in a healthy way.



Getting the conversation started

Start by asking a child what they've already heard. Most children will have heard something, no matter their age.

Ask what questions they have. Keep the conversation direct and easy to understand. Answer their questions, but don't offer more detail than they are interested in.

Follow your child's lead. Some kids may want to ask lots of questions and talk every day about COVID-19. Others may not be interested in talking about it much at all. Both are ok.

It's ok to say "I don't know." If your child asks about something and you don't know the answer, find the answer together. Check [CDC.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus) for up-to-date, reliable information.

Keep checking in. Talk about current events and what they are hearing about, their questions, and their feelings. Help them think through stories they hear about. Ask questions like: What do you think about this story? Why do you think this happened?

Keep explanations age-appropriate. Balance simple, direct facts with reassurances that they are safe and will be taken care of, especially for younger children.

Older children may need more discussions and information. Help them identify facts from rumors.

For more information:
[CDC.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)
[healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org)



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