

# Tips for Talking to Kids about COVID-19



All the news about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) can be overwhelming and scary for children. Make sure to provide them with accurate information to help calm their fears. Below are some tips to help you communicate.

## Take Time to Talk

- Ask children what they know about COVID-19 and let them know you are there to listen.
- Focus on helping your child feel safe, but be truthful. Don't offer more detail than your child is interested in since this may be overwhelming.
- Be honest if you don't know an answer to their question. This can be an opportunity for you to research the answers together.
- Use words and concepts children can understand. Gear your explanations to the child's age, language, and development.
- Validate their feelings, while reassuring them- "I understand this can be scary, but our family is well-prepared." Remind them of all the things your family, school, and neighborhood are doing to keep safe.
- Have the conversation when **YOU** are feeling calm. Remember that children will react to both what you say and how you say it.
- Follow your child's lead. If your child is not ready to talk, don't force the conversation. Let them know you are there when they are ready.

## Let Them Feel in Control

Give children specific activities to help them feel in control to relieve stress or anxiety.



Have them help you clean commonly touched items in your home.



Stay in touch with friends and family via telephone or video calls to maintain social connection.



Teach them how to protect themselves (e.g. washing hands, covering coughs and sneezes, avoid touching their face).



Make it fun! Use a tape measure to show them what 6 feet looks like (social distancing).



Instill healthy habits: exercise, proper nutrition, and adequate rest.



Practice giving elbow bumps instead of handshakes.

## Maintain a Normal Routine

- Try to keep to a regular schedule as much as possible. Routine can be reassuring during times of stress.
- Designate time for school work, but also make time for fun. Consider family activities such as board games, arts and crafts, or yoga.



## Keep the Conversation Going

**Allow children to share their fears**, but remind them you are always there to talk and listen.



**Avoid language that might blame others** and lead to stigma. Remind them that viruses can make anyone sick, regardless of a person's race or ethnicity.

**Keep checking in with your child.** Use this as an opportunity to teach children about their bodies and how the immune system helps to fight off disease.

**Monitor TV and social media.** Speak to your child about how many stories on the internet may be based on rumors and inaccurate information.



For more information, please visit:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html>

National Association of School Psychologists. "Talking to Children about COVID-19"  
<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-coronavirus-a-parent-resource>

