

How to Talk to Kids About Coronavirus (COVID-19)

(updated 3/13/20)

Concern over Coronavirus (COVID-19) can make children and families anxious. **It's important to remember that children look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events.** Take time to talk. When sharing information, it's important to provide facts without promoting panic or a high level of stress, remind children that adults are working to keep everyone safe, and give children a sense of control by giving them actions they can take to help protect themselves and others.

**"Anything that's human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting and less scary."
- Fred Rogers**

Tips for Talking to Kids

Early elementary children need brief, simple information. They need reassurance that their school and home are safe and that adults are there to keep them healthy and take care of them IF they do get sick.

Upper elementary and early middle school children may need help separating reality from rumor and fantasy. Discuss what schools and community leaders are doing to prevent germs from spreading.

Upper middle school and high school children can discuss the issue in a more in-depth manner and can be directed to appropriate sources of facts like the [CDC](#). Be honest, accurate, and factual. Having this knowledge can help them feel a sense of control.

Points to Emphasize for All Kids

- Not everyone will get Coronavirus (COVID-19). School and health officials are being especially careful to make sure as few people as possible get sick.
- Treat others with kindness and respect and don't jump to conclusions.
- Do your part to stay healthy and avoid spreading germs that may cause COVID-19:
 - **Wash your hands** often with soap and water (sing Happy Birthday twice to wash for 20 seconds) and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - **Catch that cough** with your elbow or a tissue (then throw the tissue in the trash.)
 - **Rest is best**, when you are sick, stay home and rest.

How Adults Can Support Kids

- **Pay attention and be a good listener.** Help children express their emotions through conversation, writing, drawing, playing, and singing. Accept their feelings and tell them it is okay to feel sad, upset, or stressed. Make sure children feel connected, cared about, and loved.
- **Allow them to ask questions** and limit access to news coverage on TV / internet so they have time away from reminders about the outbreak.
- **Model self-care.** Set routines, get enough sleep, exercise, and take deep breaths to handle stress. Adults can show children and youth how to take care of themselves.

Stay Connected

As information surrounding COVID-19 is constantly changing, stay connected to [EACS' COVID 19 webpage](#).

For more tips on talking to children, click [here](#) for [SAMHSAs Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers During Infectious Disease Outbreaks](#).