



# 2020-2021 Tips for Families: Talking with Your Children about COVID 19

## Talking with Your Children about COVID 19

Concern about COVID 19 can make children and families nervous and upset. Below are suggestions for ways to help your children feel secure and happy during this uncertain time.

### **Tailor what you tell your child based on the individual need/age level of your child.**

- Children younger than three are probably not aware of what's going on. It's most important to help them understand and adapt to any changes in schedules and routines.
- If your child is between 3 and 5 you might talk with them about the virus as a germ that is going around that is making people sick, and that we can keep ourselves well by washing our hands often.
- For older children you might go into more detail about ways the virus spreads and how to stay safe

**Ask your child what they know about the situation:** Ask age appropriate questions. For younger children ask them if they have heard adults talking about a new sickness. This will help you figure out what the child has heard and correct any misunderstanding they may have. Follow their lead and give them just enough information to meet their needs. Don't overwhelm them with details.

**Be calm and reassuring:** Speaking and acting calmly and honestly can do a lot to diminish your child's anxiety. Let them know that you and the other adults in their lives, as well as the adults leading our country, are doing what they need to do to keep them safe and healthy. Let your child express their concerns and fears and reassure them that all will be well.

### **Give them honest and accurate information:**

- Don't ignore their questions and concerns. Explain to them that right now very few people in the country are sick with the virus and that the adults in their life are working to keep them safe.
- Children can be told this disease is thought to be spread between people who are in close contact with one another—when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- Tell them that there are ways they can protect themselves by washing their hands often, keeping their hands away from their nose, mouth or eyes and by helping to keep tables and counters and other areas clean.

Maintain as much of a normal routine as possible: Children may be confused if they are not attending school and mom and dad are at home as well. Create a predictable routine and help children follow it.

Although this is a stressful time for everyone, talking honestly with children and reassuring them will help allay their anxiety.

### **For additional information:**

#### **General Information about COVID 19: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

#### **Handwashing and Hand Sanitizer Use at Home, at Play, and Out and About:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/hand-sanitizer-factsheet.pdf>