



10 Tips for Talking to Your Child About Coronavirus

Children, like the rest of us, are being inundated with information about the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the information they're getting may be true, and some of it may not be.

Here are some helpful tips for making sure your child gets the reliable information s/he needs without causing undue stress.

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- 1 Ask your child what s/he already knows about the virus** and how s/he's feeling. Doing so will allow you to assess what needs to be discussed and clear up any misconceptions or unnecessary worries.
- 2 Provide accurate, age-appropriate information.** Give your child clear, honest answers to questions without volunteering more information than s/he needs. Focus on the more reassuring facts available, such as the fact that many cases of COVID-19 are relatively mild.
- 3 Reassure your child that adults are working very hard to keep him or her safe.** This includes his or her parents, grandparents, teachers, community leaders, health practitioners, and public health officials.
- 4 Explain what s/he can do to help.** In this situation, following the recommendations of public health officials, such as practicing social distancing, is a big help. S/he can also check in on Grandma and Grandpa, or other vulnerable loved ones, often via text messages, letters, or video chats.
- 5 Emphasize healthy habits.** Emphasize personal hygiene practices and lifestyle choices that either reduce germs or strengthen immunity. Frequent handwashing, coughing or sneezing into the elbow or a tissue, eating nourishing foods, and getting plenty of sleep are all good ideas.
- 6 Let your child express feelings and worries.** When children are feeling anxious, it's important for them to know that they can always come to you with questions or to seek support. Reassure them.
- 7 Explain why social distancing is important.** Your child may wonder why s/he can't see Grandma or have a playdate. Explain that people can still spread the virus even if they don't look or act sick. Point out that the more people stay home, the sooner we can see our friends and loved ones..
- 8 Explain that we're acting as a community to stop the spread of the virus.** Making personal sacrifices, such as giving up soccer practice or swim lessons, may be challenging for many kids. Reframe these losses as an opportunity to exercise social responsibility and protect others.
- 9 Use a calm and reassuring tone.** Anxiety can be contagious, so chances are that if you seem worried, your child will be, too. Consider the impact of both what you say and how you say it.
- 10 Avoid listening to rumors, assigning blame, and using unkind language.** The pandemic is affecting people around the world. It's important to avoid blame and assumptions about who may have the virus and how it has spread.