

Talking to children about coronavirus (COVID-19)

Children are hearing a lot about Coronavirus from the media, their family and their friends. Feelings like worry and confusion are to be expected right now.

As a parent/carer you are the key person your child looks to for accurate information and reassurance.

Listen

- Listen to your child's questions, concerns and give them accurate information.
- Younger children need reassurance more than facts. They need to know that the adults are looking after them even when things are difficult.
- Use a calm, reassuring tone so they understand that the adults are coping with the situation.

Suggestions for speaking with younger children

"Some people are getting sick with a virus. It makes them cough and feel unwell. If this happens people are being looked after by doctors and hospitals." and "It's important we wash our hands and cough into our elbows".

Suggestions for speaking with older children

Listen to what they have heard and give them accurate information. Give more detail about how the virus is spread and help them see how they can be part of the solution "That's why we wash our hands for 20 seconds, cough into our elbow and practice social distancing. That's how we can help protect everyone."

Balance

- Try to retain normal routines as much as possible and focus on other things – besides the coronavirus.

- If your child is at home think about setting up learning routines and a dedicated spot for learning.
- Give reassurance in other ways such as playing games, reading stories, spending time in the garden or backyard so that children feel connected and safe.
- Communicate with your child's school and read the advice they give. Parents and teachers working together are a great source of confidence for your children.

Support

- Remind children to let you know if they are feeling unwell.
- If your child has been going to school - keep them home if they are feeling sick.
- Giving children guidance on what they can do to prevent infection will reduce their anxiety. Reinforce the NSW Department of Health messages about hand washing, coughing into your elbow and social distancing.
- Model these behaviours yourself - children are very aware of what their parents/carers are doing.
- Limit exposure to media, especially for younger children as it can raise children's anxiety.
- Encourage your child to keep in contact with friends and loved ones through phone or other virtual formats that are age appropriate.

Contact suggestions

If you are concerned about your child please contact the school to discuss these concerns.

You can also inform your child that the following phone and online services are still available to help them:

- 24 hour support by phone on 1800 55 1800, email or web chat is available from [Kids Helpline](#).
- Free online and telephone support and counselling to young people 12 - 25 and their families and friends on 1800 650 890 or at the [eHeadspace website](#).