

Kids Want to Know: How to Talk to Your Children About Coronavirus

We'd love to think we can protect our kids from troubling news, but we know it's not easy to do.

Now with the flurry of stories about coronavirus hitting the media on every device, along with schools temporarily closing to help halt the spread, there's no hiding from reality. It's time for parents to talk honestly to kids about the pandemic, but how?

Psychologists and health experts suggest several tips for starting the conversation—and for keeping the lines of communication open. Here are a few to keep in mind during this crisis:

Get your facts straight. We're all being bombarded with information; it's a lot to process and comprehend even as adults. Before you try and explain things to your child, be sure you have a clear understanding of the scope and the risks. The [CDC's coronavirus page](#) is a great place to find reliable, up-to-date information.

Talk to your child at their age level. The best advice for kids of all ages is to begin the conversation by asking a few questions. Find out what they've already heard at school and what they may be worried about. Then try to speak just to their specific concerns and questions and avoid filling them with details they don't need to hear that may cause more worry. Also remember that some kids want to talk it all out, others not so much. Don't force the conversation but let them know you're ready to listen and talk when they are.

Help your child take control. Nothing is more stressful to a child (or an adult) than feeling helpless. While it's important to reassure your child that you, along with doctors, nurses and other professionals, are working hard to keep everyone safe, it's also important to teach your child how to help themselves. Simple lessons like proper hand washing (singing Happy Birthday two times while they soap and rinse), being a good germ catcher (cough or sneeze into the crook of your arm instead of your hand), and practicing healthy habits like eating good foods and getting plenty of rest, give children a sense that they can be part of the solution.

Try not to stray from the family routine. Of course, this may be a challenge as school districts, restaurants and other venues close temporarily as a precaution. Still make an effort to do all you can to keep to your family's regular routine. Even if your child is off school, keep the days structured, and maintain the same mealtimes and bedtimes. And, of course, keeping busy and active keeps little minds off worrisome things.

Above all, keep calm and carry on. As the adult, your job is to be a calming and reassuring presence in your child's life. When you talk to them about coronavirus, be honest, but try not to let your inner worries come out. In that same calm voice, let your child know that they can always come to you if they feel afraid of what they hear or see...and that they can count on you for honest answers. As they say on the news, this is a developing story, so keep listening and learning yourself, and reassure your child that when you know more, you'll always share.

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We're going through some tough times, and it's natural to feel fear and worry rising to the surface at any age. If you feel you need more emotional support for yourself or for your family, don't hesitate to call our **Emotional Support hotline at 833-848-1764**. This is a free and confidential 24/7 mental health helpline staffed by trained and caring professionals ready to guide you to the care you need.

We'll keep this number open as long as necessary to support individuals and communities. Your family physician or your health insurance carrier may also be able to answer questions and provide useful information.

This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation. For the latest information visit [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

New Directions maintains a Business Continuity Plan that includes procedures for epidemic/pandemic illness for all New Directions service center areas. New Directions is monitoring the state of the Coronavirus outbreak through the CDC and WHO and will begin to implement internal procedures if the outbreak reaches a point deemed an epidemic and/or absenteeism affects more than 25% of the employee workforce. New Directions has the capability to re-distribute contact center calls within minutes using established protocols which designate backups for clinical care management activities. Current education and regular communication is available to members and partners through account management, social and web distribution channels.

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