

Coronavirus and Your Kids: How to Talk to Your Child About Covid-19

Children are hearing a lot about COVID-19 through the media and the impact it has had upon their daily lives with school closures and parents who are now isolated at home. Many are asking, “How do I talk about the COVID-19?” We are here to offer guidance on how to have this conversation.

Be Open and Honest

When such a newsworthy event like the coronavirus is occurring, kids listen and tune in. When they hear information that is too advanced or out of context, it can create thoughts that are overwhelming and troubling. Don't avoid discussing the topic with them. Approach them with basic factual information that will help them understand what's happening, without scaring them.

Speak at their Levels

- **For younger children:** Ask them what they have heard about coronavirus. Use what they tell you, if anything, to correct anything they may have misunderstood or that is not true altogether. Once you're done explaining to them, ask what they think about the virus to make sure they understand what you've told them and aren't too anxious about what is going on.
- **For pre-teens and teens:** Older children have an easier time understanding, but information overload can easily heighten anxiety. Since they are more likely to have an open line of communication with their friends who may also be receiving misinformation or they can go online on their own, show them where they may find the sources of truth. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) site [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov), is a helpful reference.

Stick to the Facts

When you're delivering information to your child, you should consider only explaining to them the topics that they are interested in. For example, if they ask about school closing or why they can't have play dates. If you don't know an answer, use that opportunity to visit [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) to look up the most up-to-date, truthful information.

Calm Fears

Stay calm when giving information. Explain that symptoms for most are like a cold or the flu. If they're worried that they may get it, explain that children don't seem to get as sick as adults. If they're worried about older people getting very sick, let them FaceTime or call their grandparents to feel reassured that they're okay right now. Remember to address your own anxieties and fears and to manage them as best you can when around your children. Children are very intuitive and will pick up on your cues if you appear anxious.

Help Kids Feel in Control

Explain to kids the important steps we can all take to help fight the virus. Teach them about the importance of frequent handwashing and lead by example. Explain social distancing and why it's important to stay home right now. A great way to encourage control is with a daily routine that can help to create a sense of normalcy for children. If they know what they're supposed to be doing for the day, they will feel more in control.

Reassure: Promise of Further Information

If your child does hear the news and are concerned about statistics, explain that death from coronavirus is rare. If you sense them getting overwhelmed, tell your children that you don't need to talk about it anymore but position yourself as a source of information if they have any questions moving forward.

ONLINE RESOURCES

- tuftsmedicalcenter.org
- [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)
- [mass211.org](https://www.mass211.org)

MA CALL CENTER
HOTLINE: 211

TUFTS MC PATIENT
& FAMILY HOTLINE
617-636-9500