

Talking with Children About COVID-19

- Remain calm. Remember that children will react to both what you say and how you say it. They will pick up cues from the conversations you have with them and with others.
- Reassure children that they are safe. Let them know it is okay if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Make yourself available to listen and to talk. Let children know they can come to you when they have questions.
- Avoid language that might blame others and lead to stigma.
- Pay attention to what children see or hear on television, radio, or online. Consider reducing the amount of screen time focused on COVID-19. Too much information on one topic can lead to anxiety.
- Provide information that is truthful and appropriate for the age and developmental level of the child. Talk to children about how some stories on COVID-19 on the Internet and social media may be based on rumors and inaccurate information. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Teach children everyday actions to reduce the spread of germs. Remind children to wash their hands frequently and stay away from people who are coughing or sneezing or sick. Also, remind them to cough or sneeze into a tissue or their elbow, then throw the tissue into the trash.
- If school is open, discuss any new actions that may be taken at school to help protect children and school staff.

“What is COVID-19?”

Try to keep information simple.

- COVID-19 is the short name for “coronavirus disease 2019.” It is a new virus. Scientists and doctors are still learning about it.
- Recently, this virus has made a lot of people sick. Scientists and doctors are trying to learn more so they can help people who get sick.
- Doctors and health experts are working hard to help people stay healthy.

How can I monitor my child’s mental health?

- Preschoolers—thumb sucking, bedwetting, clinging to parents, sleep disturbances, loss of appetite, fear of the dark, regression in behavior, and withdrawal.
- Elementary school children—irritability, aggressiveness, clinginess, nightmares, school avoidance, poor concentration, and withdrawal from activities and friends.
- Adolescents—sleeping and eating disturbances, agitation, increase in conflicts, physical complaints, delinquent behavior, and poor concentration.

You know your child best. Staying calm, maintaining routine, and listening to them is key.