

COVID-19 and Calming Kids' Worries



Bradley Hospital
Lifespan. Delivering health with care.®



With the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the news every day, it's natural to feel some fear and anxiety. Children may be concerned or frightened as well. One of the best things parents and caregivers can do is to reassure children that they are safe and provide them with age-appropriate information.

First things first

- Before talking with your children, sort out your own feelings. Discuss your own anxiety and uncertainty with other adults. Kids pick up on attitudes and feelings of trusted adults, so parents need to get support.
- Be sure you have the most current, accurate information available. You can get the latest news and updates on coronavirus on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website.

Talking to your kids

When talking to children, remember the following:

- Start the conversation by asking your child(ren) what they've heard about coronavirus at school or from friends. Calmly correct any misconceptions or false information. It may be helpful to provide age-appropriate explanations for words such as virus, isolation, quarantine, or contagious.
- Present factual information. Don't assume that kids, especially under age 8 or 9, will really understand what it means. They need you to put the facts into perspective for them.
- Convey realistic confidence in their safety. Parents need to express more certainty with younger children and deal with real ambiguity in older kids.

- Explain that although kids have likely heard that the virus started in China, their peers from the Asian culture or any other culture do not present added risk for having or spreading the illness.
- Let them know that many people are working to keep us all healthy and safe.
- Remind them of good hygiene habits. The best prevention against a virus is proper handwashing.

More Tips

Having a conversation with your children about the facts and reassuring them of their safety is critical. There are other things you can do to reduce anxiety and help the family cope during these situations.

- Watch TV with your kids. Keep the amount of exposure within reason. With the extensive news coverage, children will likely be exposed to repeated images in the media.
- Monitor screen time. As with TV time, limit exposure and be prepared to sort fact from fiction.
- Keep to a routine. The usual schedule can help reduce anxiety.
- Use your family traditions, beliefs and religious practices as sources of strength and a way to find comfort.
- A certain amount of anxiety is to be expected.

If your child shows prolonged signs of stress, seek help from your pediatrician or local mental health counselor.

Remember, helping kids feel safe and providing factual information is the goal of the conversation. On our website you can find more tips on talking with children about diseases in the news and about traumatic events.