

How to talk to your children about Coronavirus

It is important to have conversations with your children because between the constant stream of information through news, social media, other kids, and school announcements, they are probably more aware of what's going on than you realise.

Educate yourself first

To talk to your children about COVID-19 the first thing to do is make sure you have accurate and current background information yourself.



Tips for talking to younger children:

- Stay calm and keep it simple and brief as too much information about might frighten them.
- Younger children need to feel safe and loved and will respond to your stress. Stay calm and positive with your messages;
- Acknowledge that some people are getting sick with a germ that might make them cough and sneeze. You don't need to worry; we are doing lots of things to make sure we are well.
- Focus on the things you can all do – washing hands often.

Tips for talking to older children:

- Sit down and talk to them in a calm and reassuring way to ensure they are getting accurate information.
- Find out what they already know (see sample scripts for discussion below). Let your children guide the discussion by addressing what they have heard, seen, their feelings, and their questions
- Translate essential information for older children into terms they understand ahead of time, rather than needing to address misinformation and rumours coming from classmates or online sources.
- Keep checking in with your kids to see if they need reassurance, or if they have any new questions.

Words to use for to talk to older kids

- Everyone is talking about the virus called coronavirus. What have you heard about it so far?
- The coronavirus is a bit like a cold or the flu. Just like colds and flu this virus spreads through things like sneezing, coughing and touching infected things.
- If a person who has the coronavirus sneezes or coughs, germs that are inside the body come outside of the body. That's because sneezes and coughs can send tiny drops carrying germs into the air. These drops might land on people or things that people might touch.
- If someone touches those germs that came out of the sneezes and coughs, and then touch their mouth, eyes, or inside their nose, those are places where the germs can get inside the body.
- We often don't realise that we touch our faces, nose and mouth as much as we do, and that is why it is important to wash your hands often with soap and water. Soap and water are the best way to kill the virus germs.
- You will not catch the virus unless you have been near a person who has the virus or someone who has had the virus has left germs somewhere you are.
- Not everyone will get the coronavirus (COVID-19) disease and for many people who do it might only make them feel a bit sick like a flu.
- The reason lots of people are talking about this virus is that it can make some people very sick. Especially people who are older or people who have already been unwell for other reasons. So, it is important that everyone helps to stop these people from catching the virus.

- There are lots of things happening to help these people to stay safe that you may have heard about like staying inside. The reason we are doing this is because when lots of people get together, they are more likely to catch viruses from each other.

How to answer some common questions:

What can we do to help stop the virus from spreading?

- Wash hands often with soap and water (20 seconds).
- Cover your cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue, then throw the tissue in the bin.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth too much.
- Make sure you tell us if you feel unwell at all.
- Don't hug your friends and try not to touch them. Keep a bit of distance between you and your friends and classmates.
- Don't share food, drink bottles or anything else you eat with.

Explaining about family members that need protection;

You may need to reduce your contact with grandparents (or other family members) that are more at risk as time goes on.

- Because the virus can affect older people more, we will not visit your grandad/grandma for a bit to make sure they stay well.
- We will still be able to talk to them on the phone or have video chats and we can help them in other ways like dropping things off for them that they might need.