



Dear parents and carers,

We have had several requests from parents for advice about talking to and supporting children with their concerns about the coronavirus CORVID 19. We hope you will find the following advice and resources useful.

1. Ask open questions and listen

Start by inviting your child to talk about the issue. Find out how much they already know and follow their lead. If they are particularly young and haven't already heard about the outbreak, you may not need to raise the issue – just take the chance to remind them about good hygiene practices without introducing new fears. Drawing pictures can be a great way to encourage children to talk about their feelings.

2. Be honest: explain the truth in a child-friendly way

Children have a right to truthful information about what's going on in the world, but adults also have a responsibility to keep them safe from distress. Use age-appropriate language, watch their reactions, and be sensitive to their level of anxiety. If you can't answer their questions, don't guess. Take the chance to research the answers together, if this is age appropriate.

3. Show them how to protect themselves and their friends

One of the best ways to keep children safe from coronavirus and other diseases is to simply encourage regular handwashing. It doesn't need to be a scary conversation.

You can also show children how to cover a cough or a sneeze with their elbow, explain that it's best not to get too close to people who have those symptoms, and ask them to tell you if they start to feel like they have a fever, cough or are having difficulty breathing.

4. Offer reassurance

When we're seeing lots of troubling images on TV or online, it can sometimes feel like the crisis is all around us. Children may not distinguish between images on screen and their own personal reality, and they may believe they're in imminent danger. You can help your children cope with the stress by making opportunities for them to play and relax, when possible. Keep regular routines and schedules as much as possible, especially before they go to sleep, or help create new ones in a new environment.

If you are experiencing an outbreak in your area, remind your children that they are not likely to catch the disease that most people who do have coronavirus don't get very sick, and that lots of adults are working hard to keep your family safe.

6. Look for the helpers

It's important for children to know that people are helping each other with acts of kindness and generosity.

Share stories of health workers, scientists and young people among others, who are working to stop the outbreak and keep the community safe. It can be a big comfort to know that compassionate people are taking action.

7. Look after yourself

You'll be able to help your kids better if you're coping, too. Children will pick up on your own response to the news, so it helps them to know you're calm and in control.

If you're feeling anxious or upset, take time for yourself and reach out to other family, friends and trusted people in your community. Make some time to do things that help you relax and recuperate.

Advice adapted from <https://www.unicef.org.au/blog/news-and-insights/march-2020/how-to-talk-to-your-children-about-coronavirus>

Resources for KS1:

Social story about Coronavirus: <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/coronavirus-story-for-children/>

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/5-day-Happiness-Challenge.pdf>

Resources for KS2:

Newsround provides child friendly news bulletins and is aimed at children between 6-12 years old.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround>

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/5-day-Happiness-Challenge-Older-pupils.pdf>

Universal resources:

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t-t-26544-easter-egg-mindfulness-colouring-sheets>