

# How to Talk to Your Children about the Coronavirus

**Set the tone.** Use a calm, reassuring voice. This will help your children see how you are trying to cope and will help them do the same. They learn best from watching how you handle situations.

**Give your children accurate, age-appropriate information about the Coronavirus.** If you don't talk to your kids, they may invent their own explanations, which can be even more frightening than the facts.

*Early elementary school children* need brief, simple information that should balance COVID-19 facts with appropriate reassurances that their schools, churches and homes are spaces where adults are there to help keep them healthy. Reassure them that you and their doctors are there to care of them if they do get sick. Give simple examples of the steps people take every day to stop germs and stay healthy, such as washing hands.

*Upper elementary and early middle school children* will be more vocal in asking questions about whether they truly are safe and what will happen if COVID-19 comes to their school or community. They may need assistance separating reality from rumor and fantasy. Discuss efforts of school and community leaders to prevent germs from spreading, such as sanitation of common areas.

*Upper middle school and high school students* can discuss the issue in a more in-depth (adult-like) fashion and can be referred directly to appropriate sources of COVID-19 facts. Provide honest, accurate, and information about the current status of COVID-19. Having such knowledge can help them feel a sense of control.

Latest information from the Center of Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

**Answer your children's questions as accurately as possible.** It's important to listen to your children about what they have heard, what they understand, and what questions they have. Children may ask why people are not shaking or holding hands in church. Let them know that this is one way to help stop the spread of germs that happen when someone coughs or sneezes. We can still connect with people at church with a smile or wave. **This World Health Organization link** provides several short videos providing advice relevant to preventative measures that may be of help to you.

**Help children cope with stress.** Helping children cope with anxiety requires providing accurate prevention information and facts without causing undue alarm. Talk to your child about their fears, rely upon the data we currently to minimize misinformation, and don't be afraid to turn off the news if necessary. This World Health Organization link offers some helpful reminders of how to help children with stress.

**Use Resources.** The National Child Traumatic Stress Network released a five-page fact sheet for parents and caregivers focused on the infectious disease outbreak. NPR published a comic to explain the news to young people. BrainPOP has a helpful animated video and other resources: This article has additional tips for talking to your children.

**Pray.** Praying independently or together provides an opportunity to connect in times of concern with God.