

Tips and Resources for Parents

Talk with children about COVID-19

As news about the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) continues, children may have questions for parents and caregivers about the disease. Especially as normal routines change, children may display signs of worry about themselves, their families, and their friends. Certain words and practices can help children cope with their feelings and help guide discussions. The [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#) has put together a resource document to help parents and caregivers talk with their children about COVID-19.

Stay calm

Children react to what you say and how you say it. They “absorb” what is said to others and pick up on nonverbal body language. The calmer you seem, the more relaxed your child will be, which helps children better understand the information they are told. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) has put together a list of words and actions that can help parents and caregivers discuss COVID-19 with their children.

Parent self-care

- Many parents, who are working from home, may be trying to manage multiple work schedules as well as their child's online school expectation. It is a lot. Above all else, try not to stretch yourself too thin. Be gentle with yourself and with each other. We will all need to let go of some expectations of normal to accommodate this new temporary reality.
- We must also find time to support our own mental well-being in some way. Mental health practices are not a luxury, especially now. We do not do our best work when we are overstressed, and it can impact our health as well as our child's.

Make time to listen to your children

It is important to make time to talk with children when they are worried. They need to know they can express their feelings and ask questions, and that you can take the time to answer their questions.

Be aware of what your children see and hear on television, the radio and online.

Children often see and hear more than parents and caregivers realize. It is important to know what your child has seen or heard about COVID-19 so that you can discuss any worries or misinformation.

Learn what your child already knows

Children are curious by nature. Follow your child's lead by responding to questions they ask. This can help them have the age-appropriate information that they need to keep themselves healthy and safe, as well as appropriately informed. If your child asks about something that you do not know, rely upon the CDC's information to answer the question in an age-appropriate way. Be honest, but reassuring.

Tell your children that most kids with COVID-19 do not get very sick, but we can help those who could get very sick

Explain to your child that most people with COVID-19 have cold-like symptoms. Explain that some people, however, can get very sick. Some kids with chronic health conditions and older people are some of these people. Explain that we can all help by washing our hands frequently and staying home right now to help stop the virus from spreading. Letting children know this information can help them feel like they have some control and worry less.

Maintain or implement routines

Routines are important for children, especially when there is increased uncertainty and stress. As school and home routines are disrupted, children may have trouble regulating their

emotions and behaviors. Try to maintain basic daily routines as you normally would, such as getting ready for the day and bedtime schedules. If you have school-age children, create a basic loose structure for the day and week.

Consider the following tips and tools:

- Have a goal or theme for the week, like a camp!
- Use educational resources that your child's school provides for a portion of each day; the amount of time may vary depending on the age of your child.
- Spend some time outside each day for exercise and fresh air.
- Include time for fun and relaxation too.

Hotlines

If you are feeling overwhelmed or need someone to talk to about a family situation please reach out to connect with one of the resources below or the mental health crisis numbers.

- [National Parent Helpline 1-855-427-2736](tel:1-855-427-2736) Operated by [Parents Anonymous](http://www.parentsanonymous.org).
- [National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE \(7233\)](tel:1-800-799-SAFE) or TTY 1- 800-787-3224
Email and live chat are also available.
- [Postpartum Support International Helpline 1-800-944-4773](tel:1-800-944-4773).
- Mother-Baby Hope Line- Redleaf Center for Family Healing Provides Free mental health phone support for pregnant and postpartum parents and families with children 0-5 years old, as well as the mental health and medical providers that serve them. Our staff will listen and guide you to the right support — either at the Mother-Baby Program or in your community. This is not a crisis line. Call 612-873-4673. The HopeLine is available Monday through Friday, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm.