

Spread Facts, Not Fear

A helpful how-to guide for talking with your children about Coronavirus

First of all, what is it?

Coronavirus is a large family of viruses, some of which can infect people and animals. They are named for crown-like spikes on their surfaces. This new virus was first detected in China at the end of 2019 and is named, “coronavirus disease 2019”, or, COVID-19 for short.

How is it spread?

As with colds and the flu, coronaviruses spread mainly from person-to-person, through droplets sent into the air when infected people cough or sneeze. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

How is it prevented?

- ✓ avoid contact with people who are sick
- ✓ wash your hands often with soap + water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating, after blowing your nose/coughing/sneezing
- ✓ avoid touching your eyes, nose, mouth
- ✓ stay home when you are sick
- ✓ cover your coughs & sneezes
- ✓ clean/disinfect frequently touched objects & surfaces

DO keep your anxiety in check

Kids look to their parents for how to feel/respond during uncertain situations. Present yourself as a calm, reassuring source of information and support.

DO initiate the conversation during normal, day-to-day routine

DO ask what they already know about COVID19 to help guide the conversation

Ex: *“There’s been a lot of news about flu season, I wonder what you’ve heard...”*

DO tailor the conversation to the audience

Consider your child’s age, developmental level, and temperament when presenting information. Only use words your child already understands and be mindful of how much information to share. When sharing facts, focus on the here-and-now versus “What if’s”.

DO provide a frame of reference for better understanding

Remind your child of times they were sick in the past and then got better.

DO give them a sense of security & reassurance

Explain to your child that there are doctors & scientists all over the world working hard to handle the situation and make sure everyone is protected. For younger children, you can frame it similar to the job of a fireman or police officer, in that they are trained to handle special situations and always have a plan to keep people safe.

DO give them a sense of control

Focus attention on ways they can keep themselves healthy. Discuss preventative measures related to common colds or flu season to take away the “mystery” aspect of the virus: washing hands, coughing or sneezing into elbow, not touching face, eating healthy foods, getting plenty of rest...

DO create collaborative prevention measures

Make a game out of hand-washing by singing “Happy Birthday” twice or ABC’s (each takes about 20 seconds), create a Ways to Stay Healthy poster as a family with tips/reminders, practice “Vampire Coughs/Sneezes” to encourage covering their mouth

DO your best to combat exposure to misinformation or fear mongering

Be mindful of your child’s exposure to the media, including TV news coverage, social media, and peers. If you happen to see someone wearing a mask in public, don’t react and if asked, respond with *“They feel it’s their best way to stay healthy and every family has different strategies. That’s why we are doing a great job washing our hands when we need to!”*

DO take advantage of helpful resources to learn more about the virus & ways to protect yourself

BrainPop Lesson: Coronavirus: child-friendly video all about COVID19

(<https://www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus>)

Netflix’s Ask the StoryBots episode, “How Do People Catch a Cold?”: basic understanding of germs/sickness for kids

“Something Bad Happened: A Kid’s Guide to Coping with Events in the News” by

Dawn Huebner: book/guide for current event discussions

DO keep the conversation going

Let your children know they can come to you with questions or if they want to talk about it again. Reassure them that it is your job to make them feel safe and secure and that all feelings/questions are okay to talk about.

Last but not least...

DON’T forget to breathe & remain calm

Yes, there are a lot of big feelings and even bigger question marks surrounding the situation, but try your best to keep life as normal as possible, while taking smart steps to protect you & your family’s health.



Let's Keep Everyone Happy & Healthy

Thrive
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