

Talking to children about **Coronavirus**

The children in your care are probably seeing and hearing a lot about coronavirus (COVID-19) on TV, radio, and social media, as well as from other people. Talking with children about coronavirus can help them understand and cope with what's going on.

Make time to talk

Find the right time to talk with the child. When the child is ready to talk, give them your full attention.

Find out what the child knows

It's a good idea to start by asking the child what they know about the virus and whether they have any questions.

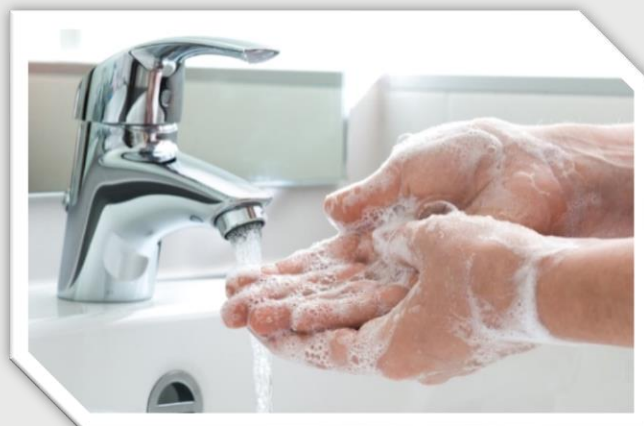
How to explain coronavirus (COVID-19) in a way the child can understand.

1. Use a calm, reassuring tone and stick to the facts.
2. For younger children, keep it simple and brief. For example, 'That's right, some people are getting sick with a germ. It makes them cough and sneeze. The sick people are being looked after well by doctors and hospitals'.
3. For older children, offer more detail. For example, 'I heard you talking with your friends about how you catch coronavirus. The virus spreads through things like sneezing, coughing and touching infected things. That's why good hygiene and hand-washing are really important. They help to protect everyone.'



PARENTS & CAREGIVERS:

It's important to monitor how much media coverage about coronavirus (COVID-19) you and your child are seeing. It's not helpful for anyone to hear distressing news over and over again. If you have the facts you need, it's often best to switch off or switch to something else.





Tune into the child's feelings

Some children might not be worried about coronavirus (COVID-19). But some might be frightened, upset or worried. They might be worried about the virus itself or about how it might affect their lives.

Ask the child how they're feeling and listen to what they say. You can also ask what they need to feel better. It might reassure the child if you share your own feelings and let them know what you're doing to cope with them.

Examples of chatting about coronavirus:

1. 'I can see that you're worried about your grandpa getting really sick. I love how caring you are. If anyone we know gets sick, the hospital will take good care of them.'
2. 'It can be scary not knowing what's going to happen with the virus. Scientists all over the world are working hard to find a vaccine and treatment. In Australia, we have good hospitals, doctors and nurses who can look after us.'
3. 'It's OK to be worried about catching coronavirus. I sometimes worry too. Some people are only getting minor symptoms like what you get when you have a cold. If I need some good information, I look at the health department website.'
4. 'It's disappointing we can't go to the footy on the weekend. But the doctors say that this will help stop the spread of coronavirus, so this is how we can help. Let's go outside and kick the ball together.'

Resources & further information:

1. Daily Health Alert & Information **updated by Australian Government Dept of Health**
2. www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/novel-coronavirus
3. FSANZ: <https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/safety/Pages/NOVEL-CORONAVIRUS-AND-FOOD-SAFETY.aspx>
4. <https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/a-z-health-reference/coronavirus-and-children-in-australia>



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