

Advice for Parents: Talking to Your Kids About COVID-19

Currently lots of things are changing quickly in our world and that can feel scary and out of control for adults and our children. Children may react to this in different ways, some may be tearful or anxious and need extra cuddles and reassurance, others may be cross and angry. Like with everyone, how they feel may change throughout the day and there may be times when they feel settled and other times when things feel a bit too much!



Below is some advice and top tips about the things that might help when helping our kids (and ourselves!) to cope.

How to talk to your kids about COVID-19 - Sometimes knowing what to say and what not to say is tricky however the following tips might help:

- **Follow your child's lead.** Some kids may want to spend time talking. But if your kids don't seem interested or don't ask a lot of questions, that's OK too
- **Find out what your child knows.** Most kids have an idea that something is going on and things are a bit different. If they do want to talk, it can help to ask them what they think first to find out what they know or have heard which can help you to find out if they're hearing the wrong information.
- **Focus on helping your child feel safe, but be truthful too.** Don't offer more detail than your child is interested in. Answer the questions they ask truthfully but if the topic doesn't come up, there's no need to raise it.
- **It's OK to say 'I don't know'.** If your child asks about something and you don't know the answer, say so. You could think about a way to find out together and if you do use websites such as [BBC Newsround](#) rather than news websites or social media. That way, you have the facts and kids don't see headlines about deaths and other scary information.



- **Speak calmly and reassuringly.** Explain that most people who get the virus feel like they have a cold or the flu. Kids pick up on it when parents worry. So when you talk about coronavirus and the news, use a calm voice and try not to seem upset. If you are having a wobbly moment when they ask a difficult question, it's OK to say 'I don't know, can I get back to you and I can try find out' and come back to it when you feel a bit stronger.
- **Put news stories in context.** If they ask, explain that death from the virus is still rare, despite what they might hear. Watch the news with your kids so you can filter what they hear.
- **Say it again!** Kids don't remember information in the same way that adults do, so they might ask the same things again and again. Try and be patient and explain again or help them to go through what they might have been told.
- **Keep talking.** Tell kids that you will continue to keep them updated as you learn more. You can say, "Even though we don't have the answers to everything right now, know that once we know more, we will let you know, too."



Resources talking to children about difficult news:

[Video : explaining in a child friendly way why we need to social distance and stay inside](#)

[Book written by a primary school teacher about Small Paul and his worries about COVID-19](#)

[Video : advice for children if you're upset about the news](#)

[Short book to support and reassure children about COVID-19](#)

[Advice talking to your child about scary world news](#)

Resources for talking to older children:

[World Health Organisation "Myth Busters" around Covid 19](#)

[Video: guidance to parents and carers about how they can help children and young people manage their mental health and wellbeing during any disruption caused by COVID-19.](#)

Resources for autism, additional needs and learning difficulties:

[Easy-read information about COVID-19](#)

[Easy-read information about social shielding](#)

[Hand washing tips for sensory needs](#)

[Tips and advice for staying at home for parents and carers](#)

[Video: supporting children with additional needs](#)