

Supporting Children and Teens who are Worried about the COVID-19 Virus

Your kids are hearing about coronavirus (COVID-19). You want to make sure they get reliable information — and you want them to hear it from you. You also want to help them feel safe. Here's how to talk about it.



Find out what your child knows already

This gives you a chance to learn how much kids know — *and to find out if they're hearing the wrong information.*

- Younger kids: “Have you heard grownups talking about a new sickness that’s going around?” “Do you know why you’re home from school for the next while?”
- Older kids: “Were people in school talking about coronavirus? What were they saying?” “Do you know why you’re home from school for the next while?”

Offer comfort – and honesty

Focus on helping your child feel safe but be truthful. Don’t offer more detail than your child is interested in. Speak calmly and reassuringly. Here are some common Q and A’s to help:

- How does COVID-19 spread?
 - “People can catch it from others that have the virus. This happens when a person sneezes or coughs, which send tiny droplets in the air. Then a person close by might catch it. It might also happen when a person touches a dirty surface and rubs their face.”
- Why are we not allowed to go to school?
 - “Most people who get sick are perfectly fine after. But schools are closed so we don’t spread the virus around to people who might get really sick.”
- When do we go back to school?
 - “School has been closed down until Monday, April 6th, and we have to wait for updates.”
- Could I be next? What if that happens to me?:
 - “Most kids don’t get as sick as adults. There are things we can do to help though, like wash our hands with soap often, and hanging around the house more.”
- Answers to other frequently asked questions are available through [Kids Health](#) .

What if I don’t know the answer?

Kids have lots of great questions that most of us don’t know: “How does soap protect me?” “How many people are sick in Ontario?”

- Check adult-oriented reliable sources such as:
 - [Health Canada COVID-19 Updates](#)
 - [Center for Disease Control COVID-19](#)
 - [World Health Organization COVID-19](#)
- Check kid-friendly sources so they can do their own research
 - [UCDSB Virtual Learning Commons](#)

John McAllister
Chair

Stephen Sliwa
Director

- [Kids Health from Nemours](#)
- [Health For Kids by the National Health Service](#)

Help Kids Feel in Control

Give your child specific things they can do to feel in control. These include:

- Getting lots of sleep which will help them stay strong and well.
- Regular hand washing also helps stop viruses from spreading to others.
- Be a good role model and let your kids see you washing your hands often!

Talk about all the things that are happening to keep people safe and healthy. Young kids might be reassured to know that hospitals and doctors are prepared to treat people who get sick. Older kids might be comforted to know that scientists are working to develop a vaccine.

What if My Child Is Worrying Much More Than Others?

All of the things above are helpful but may not be sufficient for some children and teens. If your teen or youth is worrying much more than others, try the following:

- Follow your normal routines as much as possible.
- Encourage a broad range of websites, TV and media rather than narrowly focused on only COVID-19 coverage or completely avoid it.
- Remind that any serious sickness from COVID-19 in children and teens is very rare. Worries or feelings about COVID-19 are natural, and we can still go about our day even with these thoughts.
- Practice relaxing in the day with resources from [Mindmasters 2](#) (Kindergarten to Grade 3) or [Anxiety Canada](#) (all ages).
- Seek assistance from your local [Children's Mental Health](#) agency..