



## Talking to Your Child About COVID-19

COVID-19 has led to many changes in the daily routines and lives of young children. It is important that we talk to them to help them to understand the reason for the changes and what to expect. This will help them to feel calm and participate in helping to keep everyone safe. These conversations can be difficult to have but are important, so we have put together some information to help.

### 1) Find out what your child knows and how they are feeling

First, find out what your child has heard about the coronavirus. This will give you a good starting place and help you to correct any misinformation they may have. Asking them about their feelings will also give you a good sense of how they are doing.

You can ask your child questions. Here are some examples of questions you might ask:

- “A lot of people are talking about a new virus called the coronavirus or COVID-19, have you heard about it?”
- “What have you heard about the coronavirus from other people (at school, daycare, on tv, etc.)?”
- “How are you feeling about what you know?”
- “A lot of things have changed quickly, how are you feeling?”

### 2) Share information with children at an age-appropriate level and correct any misinformation

Keep information simple and remind them that health officials are working hard to keep everyone safe and healthy. If you don't know the answer to something they ask, let your child know this and that you can look it up together. Access credible resources, such as the CDC or Alberta Health Services information for accurate information.

Some examples of information you might share are:

- COVID-19 is the short name for “coronavirus disease 2019.” It is a new virus. Doctors and scientists are still learning about it.
- Recently, this virus has made a lot of people sick. Scientists and doctors think that most people will be ok, especially kids, but some people could get quite sick.
- Doctors and health experts are working hard to help people stay healthy.
- We are trying to do what we can to stop others from getting sick.

### **3) Share with them what they can do to stay healthy and keep their families healthy**

Teaching children what they can do to help prevent the spread of the virus will give them a sense of control and responsibility. Remind them that they can practice healthy habits and home, school, and outside to help protect against the spread of COVID-19. Engage them in a child-friendly way, for example, the whole family can become “germ-busters”!

The CDC offers recommendations that can be shared with children:

- Remind children to stay away from people who are coughing or sneezing or sick.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow. Throw the tissue in the trash right away.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose, and eyes. This will help keep germs out of your body.
- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
  - Follow these five steps—wet, lather (make bubbles), scrub (rub together), rinse and dry. You can sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice.
- If you don’t have soap and water, use hand sanitizer. Hand sanitizer should contain at least 60% alcohol. Supervise young children to prevent swallowing alcohol.
- Keep things clean. Older children can help adults at home clean the things we touch the most, like desks, doorknobs, light switches, and remote controls. (Note for adults: you can find more information about cleaning and disinfecting on [CDC’s website.](#))
- If you feel sick, stay home.

### **4) Reassure children that many people are working hard to keep them safe, model calmness, and answer any questions they may have with age-appropriate facts.**

If your child is afraid or anxious, you can validate their feelings and reassure them that everyone is working to keep them safe. You might say something like “It’s okay to be a little scared or worried, remember that we are doing a lot of things to stay safe and that there are many experts also working hard to keep us safe.” Let them know that you are available anytime they have worries or questions – and be there for them.

#### **Parent Resources:**

- Canadian Psychologist Association: Coping with and Preventing COVID-19  
<https://cpa.ca/new-covid-19-factsheet/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Managing Anxiety & Stress  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
- Child Mind Institute (Video): How to Talk about Kids the Coronavirus:  
<https://youtu.be/WhVad8ToCiU>
- National Association of School Psychology: Health Crisis Resources  
<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources>