

COVID-19 SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE REGARDING CORONAVIRUS

Don't be afraid to discuss the coronavirus

Most children will have already heard about the virus. Families shouldn't avoid talking about it.

Prepare yourself and stay self-aware

If you are feeling anxious or panicked, stay aware of how this is communicated to your children. Children will react to what you say and how you respond about coronavirus. Take some time to ensure you are calm before talking with a child or young person.

Be selective

Not talking about something can actually make children worry more. Try to help your child or young person feel informed by giving them factual information from reputable sources.

Invite the child or young person to talk, write or draw what they may have heard about the coronavirus, and how they feel. Regularly provide this opportunity.

- Give them ample opportunity to ask questions and do not encourage frightening thoughts.
- Avoid negative comments, such as blaming certain people or races, and make it clear that we need to be kind and support each other. Model this to your children.
- Regularly check that what you're saying makes sense to the child or young person.
- Let them know you will continue to keep them updated as you learn more.
- Avoid media coverage that is not necessary, as too much can be overwhelming.

Listen, offer reassurance and focus on what you're doing to stay safe

Remind your child or young person that there are ways we can all reduce the chance of being infected. Children feel empowered when they know what to do to keep themselves safe. An important way to reassure children is to give children hope by highlighting all the hard work people are putting in to limit the impact of coronavirus



and by emphasising the safety precautions and what your family are doing to stay safe such as:

- The coronavirus is transmitted mostly by coughing and touching surfaces. Stay aware of this and remind children of the recommendations relating to social distancing.
- The Department of Health recommends thoroughly washing your hands as the primary means of staying healthy, or using hand sanitiser if soap and water are not available
- Remind children that they are taking care of themselves by washing their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds (you can repeat a favourite tune while washing). This is important when they come in from outside, before they eat, and after blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing or using the bathroom.
- If children ask about face masks, explain that the experts at the Department of Health say masks aren't necessary for most people. If children see people wearing face masks, explain that those people are being extra cautious.

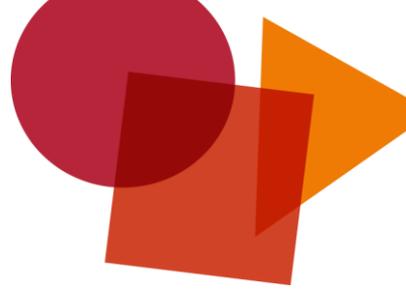
Try as much as possible to keep to your family's normal routine

Supporting approaches that enables as much routine and normality as possible in the circumstances will be a priority. Where changes in routine are significant, create new ones, and seek your child's input into this wherever possible.

If you would like to know more

If you like more information to support your conversations with children and young people in care:

- For younger children, [consider using this booklet](#) to assess their current understanding and feelings.
- The Australian Childhood Foundation has made this [visual poster about staying connected with our children](#).
- [UNICEF has published easy-to-follow information](#) for adults who need to talk to children and young people about coronavirus.



- The federal Department of Health [shared this video about talking to children about coronavirus](#) from the Child Mind Institute.
- [The World Health Organisation has a useful fact sheet](#) about helping children cope with stress during the outbreak.
- The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry [has guidelines](#) about how to talk to children about public health emergencies.

Reference:

This information has been sourced from the:
Child Mind Institute. Attributing Dr Janine Domingues, PHD and Dr Jamie Howard, PHD
Department of Education Tasmania How to talk to you child about Novel Coronavirus
(COVID-19)
Department for Child Protection South Australia

Please direct any questions or requests for further information to
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