



Tips for Talking to Kids About COVID-19 Safety

Children are exposed to so many sources of information regarding COVID-19, from their friends and social media to the conversations they overhear on TV and between adults. Make sure what they hear is reliable and accurate. Here are some tips that can help make talking with the kids in your life about COVID-19 easier.



Find Out What Kids Already Know

- Ask questions geared to their age level. For younger children, you could say, “Do you have questions about the new virus that’s going around?” This gives you a chance to learn how much kids know — and to find out if they’re hearing the wrong information.
- Follow their 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.



Offer Comfort and Honesty

- Focus on helping kids feel safe, but be truthful. Don’t offer more detail than your child is interested in. If the topic doesn’t come up, there’s no need to raise it.
- If they ask about something and you don’t know the answer, say so. Use the question as a chance to find out together. Check the Wisconsin Department of Health Services website for up-to-date, reliable information about COVID-19. That way, you have the facts and kids don’t see headlines about deaths and other scary information.
- Speak calmly and reassuringly. Kids pick up on it when parents worry. So when you talk about COVID-19 and the news, use a calm voice and try not to seem upset.
- Give kids space to share their fears. It’s natural for kids to worry, “Could I be next? Could that happen to me?” Let your child know that kids don’t seem to get as sick as adults. Let them know they can always come to you for answers or to talk about what scares them.
- Know when they need guidance. Be aware of how your kids get news and information, especially older kids who go online. Point them to age-appropriate content so they don’t end up finding news shows or outlets that scare them or have incorrect information.



Help Kids Feel in Control

- Give children specific things to do to feel in control. Teach kids that getting lots of sleep and washing their hands well and often can help them stay strong and healthy. Explain that 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! Also, teach kids that wearing a mask properly in public can help prevent contracting and spreading viruses.
- 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. Talk about the vaccines that people are getting to protect against the virus. Kids who are over 2 years old are too young to get a vaccine, but can wear a mask to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. These talks also help kids manage changes to their normal routine.
- Put news stories in context. If they ask, explain that serious illness and death in kids from the virus is still rare, despite what they might hear. Watch the news with your kids so you can filter what they hear.

- Reassure kids about their loved ones' safety. Children and teens often worry more about family and friends than themselves. For example, if kids hear that older people are more likely to be seriously ill, they might worry about their grandparents. Letting them visit, call, or video chat with older relatives can help them feel reassured about their loved ones.
- Let kids know that it's normal to feel stressed out at times. Everyone does. Recognizing these feelings and knowing that stressful times pass and life gets back to normal can help children build resilience.



Keep the Conversation Going

- Keep checking in with the kids in your life. Use talking about COVID-19 as a way to help kids learn about their bodies, like how the immune system fights disease.
- Talk about current events with children often. It's important to help them think through stories they hear about. Ask questions: What do you think about these events? How do you think these things happen? Such questions also encourage conversation about non-news topics.



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