

Tips for parents



Talking to your kids about COVID-19 and help for homeschooling

The novel coronavirus, COVID-19, has led to many school closures and changes in routine which may have increased anxiety in children who don't understand the disruption in their daily lives. Helping children understand the changes in routine may help them feel safe and comforted. Right now, children may only know that they can't see their friends every day, that they have to do schoolwork at home or they may sense anxieties coming from adults or older siblings in the home.

While many of us are experiencing drastic changes to everyday life, it can be especially hard on children who are going through these changes without fully understanding why. And though the situation is serious, it doesn't have to be scary. Parents can follow a few helpful tips to talk to children about COVID-19 and how to help them keep learning if their school has closed.

Tips from health and wellness experts

▪ **Remain calm and reassuring.¹**

The Child Mind Institute recommends that parents let children talk about their feelings and let them know that adults are working to keep them safe and healthy.

▪ **Be available.²**

Children may need extra comfort and may have a lot of questions, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

▪ **Pay attention to what they see on television and the internet.³**

Be mindful of what children see on the news or websites regarding the virus and try not to watch or listen to potentially upsetting news when children are in the room, according to the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.

▪ **Follow a normal routine.¹**

Find a schedule that includes education, entertainment and family time that works for everyone in the household and stick to it as much as possible.

▪ **Be honest and accurate.⁴**

The National Association of School Psychologists recommends sharing age-appropriate information on the virus and what experts are doing to help everyone. They suggest following these guidelines:

Early elementary children need brief explanations and steps they can use to keep themselves healthy, such as washing their hands more and not getting close to other people, even friends.

Middle school children may have more questions, but also need reassurance that the adults in their lives are working to keep them healthy.

High-schoolers can handle more direct information and can read more about the virus from reliable sources such as the [CDC](#).

▪ **Review and practice hygiene and healthy living.²**

The CDC says parents should encourage children to wash their hands, cover a sneeze or cough with a tissue or the bend of their elbow, and to not share food and drinks.

▪ **Address changes in school.⁴**

Talk through changes in routine, whether children are still in school or learning from home. Discuss any new rules or expectations the school has put in place.

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¹ The Child Mind Institute, Talking to Kids about the Coronavirus, <https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Talking with children about Coronavirus Disease 2019, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/talking-with-children.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcommunity%2Fschools-childcare%2Ftalking-with-children.html.

³ American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, Talking to Children about Coronavirus (COVID19), https://www.aacap.org/App_Themes/AACAP/Docs/latest_news/2020/Coronavirus_COVID19_Children.pdf.

⁴ National Association of School Psychologists, Helping Children Cope with Changes Resulting from COVID-19, <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/helping-children-cope-with-changes-resulting-from-covid-19>.

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