

Talking to Kids about Coronavirus

Worries over coronavirus may make children and families anxious. While we don't know exactly what to expect from this outbreak, there are important steps we should actively take to prevent the spread of infection and to support our youth. Children look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events: if adults seem overly worried, kids' anxiety may rise. Here are some ways to reassure young people that health and school officials are working hard to ensure that everyone is staying healthy.

Remain calm and reassuring.

- Children will react to and follow your verbal and nonverbal reactions and cues.
- Remind young people that they are less likely to get seriously ill from coronavirus, and that you and other adults are there to keep them safe and healthy.

Make yourself available.

- It is important that children know they have someone who will listen to them. Make time for them and check in frequently.
- Young people may need extra attention from you so they can talk about their concerns, fears, and questions.
- Children may be concerned about their relatives. Offer them opportunities to check in via phone or video chat.

Monitor television viewing and social media.

- Remind young people that many stories about coronavirus they hear at school or see on the internet may be based on rumors and inaccurate information.
- Avoid constantly checking for updates on coronavirus, as this can increase anxiety.
- Engage children in games or other interesting activities instead.

Maintain a normal routine as much as possible.

- Keep to a regular schedule, as this can be reassuring and promotes physical health.

Be honest and accurate.

- In the absence of factual information, children often imagine situations far worse than reality.
- Don't ignore their concerns, but reassure them that at the present moment very few people in this country are sick with coronavirus, and that the majority of cases are mild.
- For additional factual information contact your school nurse, ask your doctor, or check the CDC website or [nyc.gov/health](https://www.nyc.gov/health).

Review and model basic hygiene and healthy lifestyle practices for protection.

- Wash hands multiple times a day for at least 20 seconds (singing Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star slowly or Happy Birthday twice). Use hand sanitizer when you don't have access to a sink.
- Sneeze or cough into a tissue (throw away the tissue immediately!) or into your elbow. Do not share food or drinks.
- Practice giving elbow bumps instead of handshakes to reduce the spread of germs.