

How to Talk to Your Children About the Coronavirus



- **Manage your anxiety first.** Our children look up to us in order to learn how they should be handling moments of stress and uncertainty. Modeling adaptive coping strategies during these times helps children see firsthand how to manage anxiety and fear. Take the time to check in with yourself before doing so with your children.
- **Have the correct information ready.** Make sure you have the following information ready from reliable resources, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
 - What is the coronavirus or COVID-19?
 - How can you get this virus?
 - What are the possible symptoms?
 - What are some of the protective measures being taken?
- **Let your child lead the conversation.** It is important to note the developmental age of your children. Instead of giving out too much information at once, ask them open questions, such as:
 - What do you know about this virus?
 - What are you afraid of?
 - What can I do in order to help?
- **Focus on being reassuring.** Keep the conversation on a positive note. Make sure to give out facts from reliable resources and inform your children on the precautions being taken for their safety. Do not be afraid to say you don't know the answer to one of their questions.
- **Create a healthy routine.** Children thrive on healthy routines and knowing what is expected of them. Take the opportunity to be creative and make them part of the process. You can make colorful schedules that include playtime, study time and bath time. Make sure to incorporate a positive reward system where they can work towards a goal every day, such as extra playtime.
- **Problem solve with your children.** In order to give your children a sense of control, let them be part of your family's preparations. Depending on their age and capabilities, they can help organize the groceries, clean the home, and come up with fun activities for the entire family.
- **Limit media news exposure.** Children are always aware of their surroundings, even when we think they are distracted by something else. Make sure to be aware of what they are listening to or watching.
- **Maintain open communication.** Depending on your child's age and developmental stage, he or she may need repetition of information previously discussed. Be aware that this is normal and be prepared to have the conversation more than once. The goal is to make sure your child feels comfortable coming to you for answers and reassurance.



**Nicklaus
Children's
Hospital**