

## Talking to children and young people about Coronavirus (Covid-19)

This leaflet will help you to know how to speak to children and young people about Coronavirus and support them to understand and cope with the things they are hearing and seeing.

This is an unprecedented situation and we are being exposed to a high volume of information about coronavirus on the news, on social media, and in our everyday conversations. We may be feeling overwhelmed and anxious and this is the same for children and young people.

It is important that we provide children and young people with factual information about coronavirus, at a developmentally appropriate level, and give clear instructions about how they can help to control the spread of the virus.



## What should I tell my child?

Give time and space to listen to children and young people's worries and concerns and answer their questions as openly and honestly as you can.

Very **young children** need brief, simple, information and reassurance that they are safe and that the people they care about are taking action to keep themselves safe.

- Reassure them that the Government is working hard to ensure that people throughout the country stay safe and healthy.
- Tell them that not everyone will get the virus and that the vast majority who do get it will recover fully.

Support **older children** to feel informed and give them a sense of control (to reduce anxiety) by ensuring you provide, or direct them, to accurate and factual information about the current status of coronavirus (see links in this leaflet).

- Try to limit their access to news/information on the internet/television/social media, especially if they are anxious or worried. Encourage them into distraction activities e.g. listening to music, watching a film or comedy, playing games etc.,
- Remind children/young people that no individual or group is 'responsible' for the virus. Challenge any negative comments they make or any stereotyping.

- Children and young people look to adults to guide them as to how to react to worrying or stressful situations. Acknowledge that it is normal to have these feelings and support them to reframe their thoughts and concerns to a more helpful way of thinking.
- Be ready to listen but do not worry if the child chooses not to talk. They may express their feelings in other ways e.g. play or in their behaviour.
- Avoid constantly monitoring or discussing updates on the status of COVID -19, as this can increase anxiety for you and your child.
- Maintain familiar routines and structures– If schools close and movement of people restricted, it will be important to provide a sense of 'normality' with regular mealtimes, bedtime, schoolwork provided etc.
- Children may feel less anxious and in control if they have clear guidance as to how to control the spread of infection. Reinforce good hygiene and health behaviours e.g. regular hand washing.
- If your child does feel unwell, you can reassure them that they are getting the best care, and that by following the rules they will help keep everyone safe.
- Make time for yourself and make sure you have other adults you can talk to. If you feel worried and panicked it may not be the best time to speak about COVID-19 with your child.

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**A Guide  
for  
Parents, Carers & Schools**

The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of a new continuous cough and/or high temperature. If you have these symptoms, however mild, stay at home and do not leave your house for 7 days from when your symptoms started. You do not need to call NHS 111 to go into self-isolation. If your symptoms worsen during home isolation or are no better after 7 days, contact NHS 111 online. If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.

Wash your hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds using soap and hot water, particularly after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose, or after being in public areas where other people are doing so. Use hand sanitiser if that's all you have access to.

To reduce the spread of germs when you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, or your sleeve (not your hands) if you don't have a tissue, and throw the tissue away immediately. Then wash your hands or use a hand sanitising gel.

Clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces using your regular cleaning products to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.

### **Advice and Guidance on Talking to Children and Young People:**

[www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-talk-your-child-about-coronavirus-covid-19](http://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-talk-your-child-about-coronavirus-covid-19)

[www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/bps-highlights-importance-talking-children-about-coronavirus](http://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/bps-highlights-importance-talking-children-about-coronavirus)

[www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-teachers-can-talk-children-about-coronavirus-disease-covid-19](http://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-teachers-can-talk-children-about-coronavirus-disease-covid-19)

### **General Advice and Guidance from Public Health England:**

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance)

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