

# COVID-19



## Talking with your child about COVID-19 (novel coronavirus)

Even if you've tried to keep your child away from the news and adult conversations, they're bound to be curious – and maybe anxious about what's going on. Here are some tips for talking with young children about COVID-19.

1. **Follow your child's lead.** Some kids will have lots of questions, while others won't be that interested – both reactions are normal. When you're answering questions don't offer more detail than your child is asking for.
2. **Help your child feel safe and reassured.** Show them you're listening and that you have plenty of time for them. Feeling safe and being comforted by you will help your child's wellbeing more than any factual information you can give them.
3. **Find out what your child already knows.** Ask questions that suit their age, for example, 'Are kids at daycare talking about the sickness that's going around?'
4. **Provide the facts in language that suits their age.** If your child asks a question and you don't know the answer, find out together. This link has a short booklet, in various languages, explaining COVID-19 in a simple way that children under 7 can understand – [www.mindheart.co/descargables](http://www.mindheart.co/descargables)
5. **Look and listen for clues about how your child is feeling.** They may be feeling worried, scared, confused or angry – these are all normal reactions to unusual events. This is a great chance to teach your child that it's okay to have 'big feelings', and to talk about them.
6. **Shield children from media coverage.** Young children can become distressed by the emotion in a media report, even if they don't understand the content. Look up reliable websites so you can answer questions calmly and shape the way your child learns about what's going on.
7. **Provide perspective.** It's not common for young children to catch COVID-19, and when they do the illness tends to be mild. Talk with your child about how clever our bodies are at fighting off viruses, and how we can help our bodies do their job by washing our hands and social distancing.





8. **Focus on positives.** Talk about all the good things that are happening to keep people safe and healthy. Let children know there are plenty of doctors and nurses working to help sick people get better. Point out ways that families, friends and neighbours are helping each other.
9. **Help your child take charge.** We all feel more confident when we're 'doing something'. Teach your child that there are things they can do to help them stay well: wash hands, cover coughs and sneezes and stay home when sick. You can turn some of these activities into a game, for example by singing hand-washing songs. Keep your expectations realistic, given your child's developmental level and personality – you know a huggy four-year-old will struggle with social distancing, so provide encouragement and support!
10. **Try to maintain a normal routine.** That's not easy when everything feels different. Day care may be closed, parents may be working from home, visits to grandparents may now involve technology. Try to establish a 'new normal' as quickly as you can. Kids are reassured by regular routines and familiar rituals.
11. **Be a good role model.** Children look to adults for guidance on how to feel and act. Stay grounded, calm and confident, and your kids are likely to do the same.
12. **Don't forget, the best way to take care of them is to take care of yourself.** Be kind to yourself, connect with friends, use the resources available to you. If the situation is getting to you, talk it through with someone you trust.

### HELPFUL RESOURCES:

- These storybooks, 'Birdie and the Virus' and 'Birdie and the Big Sickness', help children understand more about illness in the community and how to stay well:  
[www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/chq/our-services/mental-health-services/qcpimh/natural-disaster-resources/storybooks](http://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/chq/our-services/mental-health-services/qcpimh/natural-disaster-resources/storybooks)
- This video explains COVID-19 in simple language for kids:  
[www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus](http://www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus)
- This booklet explains COVID-19 in multiple languages:  
[www.mindheart.co/descargables](http://www.mindheart.co/descargables)
- Activities for young children at home:  
[www.zerotothree.org/resources/3264-at-home-activity-guide](http://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3264-at-home-activity-guide)
- Tips on 'visiting' relatives by video chat:  
[www.zerotothree.org/resources/2535-five-tips-to-make-the-most-of-video-chats](http://www.zerotothree.org/resources/2535-five-tips-to-make-the-most-of-video-chats)
- Resources to help parents support their mental health:  
[www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/coronavirus-anxiety-resources](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/coronavirus-anxiety-resources)

### For more information

For the latest COVID-19 information and service updates for the Queensland Children's Hospital, visit [www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/covid-19/](http://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/covid-19/)

Download the Queensland Children's Hospital app, My QCH, via the App Store or Google Play to receive notifications.

