



# How to talk to kids about COVID-19

## Here is a list of helpful resources when talking to kids about COVID-19

- Talking to Kids About the Coronavirus: Article from the Child Mind Institute - [Click Here](#)
- What Coronavirus is: Video from BrainPOP - [Click Here](#)
- How to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus: PBS Article and Videos - [Click Here](#)
- How to wash your hands: Video from BrainPOP - [Click Here](#)
- Just For Kids: A Comic Exploring The New Coronavirus - [Click Here](#)
- Orange County Health Care Agency Preventative Measures: Poster for Kids - [Click Here](#)
- Older Kids: 8th Grade Plus Explanation, Interactive Slideshow, and Poll - [Click Here](#)
- Younger Kids: Video, What is Coronavirus? - [Click Here](#)
- Online Yoga for Kids: Video - [Click Here](#)
- Yoga for Teens: Video - [Click Here](#)
- Talking to Teens and Tweens About Coronavirus: New York Times - [Click Here](#)
- A Parent Resource: Talk to Children About COVID-19 - National Association of School Psychologists - [Click Here](#)
- Talking to Kids about the Coronavirus: Article by Danielle Jonas - [Click Here](#)

## Talking to Kids about the Coronavirus

The current coronavirus pandemic is causing anxiety and significant life changes throughout the world. Information about the virus can be confusing, overwhelming and

scary. Talking about the virus, what's being done to combat it and how all the changes around us are affecting our lives is crucial in helping kids to feel calm and empowered. Here are some tips:

**Talk about your feelings as a family!** Modeling of emotional regulation and expression is the best way to help kids talk about their worries and to feel safe about asking any questions they may have. Consider saying something like:

"Wow, it really is a bummer that (activity/event) is cancelled. I was really looking forward to that and I feel sad and disappointed that plans changed. How are you feeling?"

"It makes me feel scared to know that people are getting sick and to see how many parts of my life are changing. What helps me to feel better is to (take deep breaths, read a book, call a friend, play a game, do some art, play a video game, etc.)" Do you have any questions?

**Use developmentally appropriate, concrete language.** For school aged children, consider saying something like:

"The coronavirus is a type of germ that is strong and making some people sick. It spreads from person to person when people sneeze or cough on or near each other."

"It's more serious for older people and people who have other health problems, but not as dangerous for kids like you."

"Everyone is working together to stop the virus from spreading more. That is why (talk about things that may be cancelled or changed in their lives) is cancelled/postponed so that we can help protect everyone we love."

"There are very smart scientists, doctors, nurses and politicians all around the world who are working very hard and fast to help do everything they can to keep people safe from the virus."

## For more information:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html>

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

**Empower the whole family to feel in control** of the actions that they can take to help stop the spread, such as washing hands as much as possible, not touching their faces and taking advantage of extra time at home. Using scented hand sanitizers and lotions after washing can add excitement to the process. For toddlers, consider allowing them to draw or use stamps on their hands with washable markers/ink and encourage them to scrub until the ink is off their hands (but remind them that this is only acceptable to do when a grown-up is helping). If needed, a sticker chart or additional reward system can aid in encouraging hand hygiene as well.

**Maintaining a routine** (waking up/going to bed at the same time, getting dressed, normal hygiene routine, normal meal routine) when kids are home from school can help with structure and normalization. Scheduling times for school work and times for play/relaxation can help keep kids on task when it's time to focus!

**Keep things as fun as possible** by incorporating special family activities such as cooking/baking, doing an exercise routine/dance party, watching a show or movie, doing a family art project, reading books, playing board games or video games, doing a puzzle or cleaning/organizing the house! Try to keep a positive mood in your home, reminding kids that it's an important time to work together and support each other!

**Try to avoid watching the news** while kids of all ages are around. News cycles tend to focus on the most dramatic story line, which can be scary and unhelpful.

If you have children who are at different developmental levels/have different needs about how much information they want, **try to have separate conversations**. Remind older kids/kids who want more information that it might be more helpful to have the conversation when their sibling is not around.

**Encourage older kids to minimize time on social media**, where news tends to be broadcasted frequently and dramatically. Instead, help them to spend time doing other activities such as school work, reading, phone calls or facetimeing with friends, spending

time with siblings, calling older relatives to check in, art projects, cooking/baking, puzzles, exercising. For some kids, earning screen time by completing healthier activities can be helpful.

## REFERENCES

*This was written by an El Rodeo and BHHS graduate, Danielle Jonas. She is getting her PhD at NYU and is a licensed therapist working with children.*