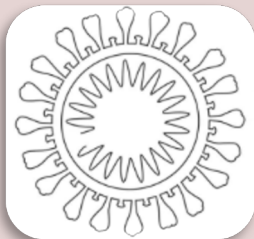


COVID-19

How to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus

Quick Check!



Coronaviruses “are a large family of viruses. Some cause illness in people and others cause illness in animals. Human coronaviruses are common and are associated with mild symptoms, similar to the common cold”⁵

Symptoms

- Cough
- Fever
- Difficulty Breathing



If you or your child is showing coronavirus symptoms, please contact your primary care provider or Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000



Dear Parents,

We know that this is probably a stressful time for you and your families. Many of your children are at home and probably are asking some challenging questions about the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic. Your children may have already heard something about COVID-19 – and you want to give them the right information.

Please take a read through this resource guide as a way to help talk to your children about COVID-19.

All the best,

On behalf of the staff and Practicum Students from the Mary J. Wright Research and Education Centre at Merrymount.

The Do's and Don'ts of Talking to Kids about COVID-19^{3,4,8}

Do

Be proactive and educate your child

about COVID-19: Provide factual, up-to-date information about the current status of COVID-19 in Ontario or your region. Educate your children about the COVID-19 health guidelines.



Assess your child's knowledge and

understanding: Determine their current level of understanding about the virus by asking open-ended questions (e.g., Tell me what you've heard about the coronavirus so far?).



Provide answers to questions that are

asked: Only answer questions that are asked by your child. Let your child's questions be a guide as to how much information you should provide. If you don't know an answer to a question, then say so!



Explore and address your child's fears

and concerns: Investigate what specific fears and worries your child has and try to address those worries and concerns.



Communicate and provide explanations that are developmentally appropriate:

If you have children from different age groups (e.g., a 6-year-old and a 14-year-old), ensure that your questions and answers are tailored to each child's developmental level and language abilities.



Provide reassurance, safety, and

comfort: Use a calm and reassuring tone of voice. Ensure that your child feels safe and loved. If true, emphasize to your child that his/her family are safe and healthy.



Have ongoing conversations:

Regularly check in with your child to see if he/she has any new questions or concerns. Having regular check-ins will also ensure that the child feels reassured and up to date on all the relevant details.



Don't

Don't avoid talking to, or hoping that your child doesn't hear about COVID-19:

Not talking to your child about COVID-19 may lead to confusion or anxiety and worry.

Don't assume that your child is up to date and knows all the accurate information:

Not checking in and assessing your child's knowledge about the virus may lead him or her to form false interpretations about COVID-19.

Don't provide more information than what is being asked:

Providing additional or unnecessary details may evoke confusion or worry in a child, especially the younger ones.

Avoid voicing your own fears and anxieties in front of a child:

Children can easily pick up on their parents' cues and worries, so try to process your own anxieties first before talking to your child.

Avoid communicating to all children in the same way:

If you have children from different age groups, avoid using one standard language or communication style; this may lead to confusion or uncertainty among young children or those with language delays.

Don't act in an alarmed and anxious manner in front of a child:

Being alarmed or panicked when talking to children about the COVID-19 may evoke anxiety and fear among some children.

Don't have just one conversation:

Not giving children multiple opportunities to ask questions and receive answers may lead to doubt or confusion.

Frequently Asked Questions by Kids^{1,2,6}

Providing Answers about COVID-19

1. What is COVID-19?

- COVID-19 is short for “coronavirus disease 2019”
- It’s a new virus, which means that doctors and scientists are still learning about it, like how it works or gets passed along from one person to the next
- A lot of people have recently gotten sick because of the virus, but doctors think that most people who get the virus will be OK - especially kids
- What’s important to know is that doctors and researchers from all around the world are working really hard and trying their best to keep everyone safe and healthy

2. What is a pandemic?

- A pandemic is a global disease outbreak
- This means that the disease can spread from one person to the next quite easily, make people feel sick, and travel from one part of the world to the next quickly

3. Why do I have to wash my hands so much?

- In our family, it’s important to wash our hands because we are “germ-busters”
- Sometimes, germs get on our hands and if we don’t do anything to get rid of them, then they can make us sick
- So, we wash our hands to blast away the germs!



4. What happens if you get sick? Or I get sick?

- For lots of people, COVID-19 looks like getting the flu. So, you might have a fever, cough, or a hard time taking deep breaths
- For only a really small group of people, COVID-19 might lead to more serious problems
- So far, doctors say that children don’t seem to get very sick; and for most adults who get sick, they get better
- If we do feel unwell, it doesn’t necessarily mean we have COVID-19 because we can get sick from all different kinds of germs
- But, it’s important to know that if we do get sick from COVID-19, we’re going to do everything possible to make sure we get better again

5. When can I go back to school?

- We are keeping in close contact with your school and are always staying up to date on when you might be able to start up again
- But, both your school and all of us parents want to make sure that when you go back, everybody can stay healthy

Talking to Kids from Different Age Groups⁷

Keep Explanations Age-Appropriate

Young Children



- Use simple language that is easy to understand
- Share small pieces of information
- Talk about COVID-19 and also give comforting reminders that adults can help them stay healthy and safe

Older Children



- Be prepared to answer their questions, for example, regarding their safety or what to do if COVID-19 happens in the area they live in
- You may need to help them tell apart fact and fiction

Adolescents



- You can talk about COVID-19 to them in more detail
- Give up-to-date COVID-19 information that includes accurate facts
- Share reliable sources of information regarding COVID-19 with them

How to Explain What Social Distancing is to Children and Adolescents^{9,11}

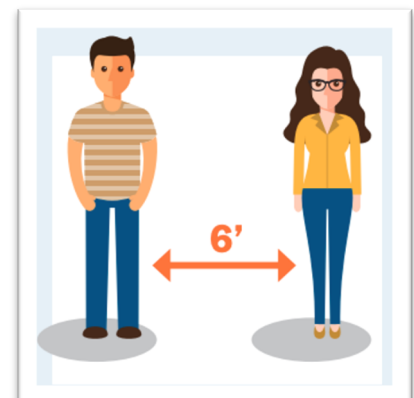
Tell children and adolescents that social distancing means we have to avoid close contact with other people. People have to keep a safe physical distance (6 ft.) with each other, and to do this, we have to make small changes to our usual routine. Explain that physical distancing is important to help stop the spreading of germs that make people fall sick with COVID-19.

What Children can do during Social Distancing

- Keep in touch with family or friends using the telephone or technological applications like Skype, Facetime, and Whatsapp
- Have a go at new hobbies or interests
- Play board games
- Walk or go bike-riding outside

What Adolescents can do during Social Distancing

- Connect with friends using video communication
- Jog, rollerblade, or go bike-riding outside
- Enjoy a book or magazine; engage in a new learning activity
- Assist with household tasks; organize and/or design their room



Ways to Protect Yourself and Kids Against COVID-19¹⁰



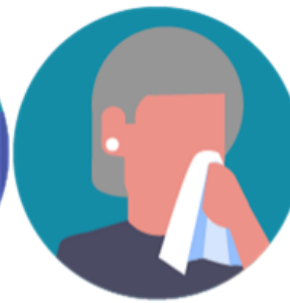
FREQUENT
HANDWASHING



SOCIAL
DISTANCING



STAY HOME
WHEN SICK



COVER COUGHS
AND SNEEZES



CLEAN AND
DISINFECT

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