

If your kids are worried about the coronavirus

News about the outbreak and spread of a new strain of coronavirus (COVID-19) may be causing your children to feel anxious. These tips can help you ease their worries.

Be informed

Start by making sure you have up-to-date information about COVID-19. Check sources such as the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and the [World Health Organization](#). They can help you understand the symptoms, scope, risks, and safety precautions for the disease. They can also tell you what is being done to help prevent it from spreading.

Ask, listen, and assure

Your young child or teen may come to you with concerns about the virus, or you may decide to bring it up first. Ask what they've heard about it so you can correct any misinformation. Acknowledge their feelings and ask questions to help you identify the sources of their fears. Ask what they are afraid will happen, and then answer with details you think they can handle based on their ages, tendencies to worry, etc.

Address your kids' fears calmly with these assurances, if they apply:

- The virus is not widespread in your country or in your state/city/community/school. If there are cases nearby, focus on learning how to keep the disease from spreading.
- Your family will take extra care to stay healthy. Everyone should wash their hands and keep hands off their faces as much as possible. Cover coughs and sneezes, and don't share drinks and utensils with others. Avoid others who are sick, and go to the doctor if they get sick.
- Experts are doing all they can to understand the virus, treat people who have it, and keep it from spreading.



Avoid making comparisons that may stir up more anxiety. Don't argue how much greater the risk is of getting and dying from the flu, for example. Remind your children that their amazing bodies are built to fight off viruses.

Limit news exposure

Be careful what you and other adults say about the coronavirus when young children are nearby. An offhand remark might be taken out of context and make kids feel anxious. Avoid graphic news coverage when your kids are present, too. Encourage your anxious teen to limit or avoid time spent researching the virus and watching news about it.

Be a good role model

Your children will look to you to decide if their fears are grounded. Model good hygiene, reasonable precautions, and a calm attitude. If you aren't anxious, they will likely feel better.

If your children are still stressed and anxious in spite of taking these recommended steps, you can call your primary care physician, who may refer you to a behavioral health specialist. For immediate help for emotional distress related to the virus, contact the [SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline](#) 24/7 at 1-800-985-5990. You can also call CTBHP at 1-877-552-8247, or look for a behavioral health provider on the CTBHP website at <http://www.ctbhp.com/members/mbr-findprv.html>