

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](#) to understand the symptoms, scope, risks and safety precautions for the disease, as well as 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, and isn't in your state/city/community/school. If there are cases nearby, focus on efforts underway to keep the disease from spreading.
- Your family will take extra care to stay healthy by washing your hands, keeping your hands off your faces as much as possible, covering coughs and sneezes, not sharing drinks and utensils with others, avoiding others who are sick, and going to the doctor if you 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 trigger anxiety. 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's stress and anxiety persist in spite of taking these recommended steps, contact your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or your primary care physician who may refer you to a behavioral health specialist. Another option is to call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration's Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990, a 24/7, 365 day-a-year, free national hotline that provides immediate crisis counseling. It is toll-free, multilingual and confidential.