

Supporting and protecting the emotional well-being of children and young people through Covid19

It is vital to talk openly to children and reassure them about the changes they are seeing around them due to Coronavirus.

Some of the changes, like people wearing face masks or empty supermarket shelves, can be scary for children, so they are likely to need to talk to someone they trust about some of the imaginative misinformation they might have heard from friends at school.

It is important to be truthful, but remember the child's age. Give them factual information, but adjust the amount and detail to fit their age.

For example, you might say 'we don't yet have a vaccination for Coronavirus, but doctors are working very hard on it' or 'a lot of people might get sick, but for most people it is like a cold or flu and they get better'.

Other advice from includes:

- Allow children to ask questions: It is natural that children will have questions and worries about Coronavirus. Giving them the space to ask these questions and have answers is a good way to ease anxiety.
- Younger children might understand a cartoon or picture better than an explanation.
- It is ok to say you don't know - at the moment, there are questions we don't have answers to about Coronavirus.
- Maybe your child has an idea too – let them tell you or draw them.
- Try to manage your own worries: Uncertainty can make all of us feel anxious or worried. Identify other adults you can talk to about your own worries. Use techniques that help to make you feel a bit calmer - if you are at home, music, breathing and relaxation techniques, distraction (such as watching something funny), and time with family can all help.
- Give practical guidance: Remind your child of the most important things they can do to stay healthy but find motivation for keeping going, like thinking of a song they want to sing while washing their hands).

BPS' Division of Educational and Child Psychology (2020)

There is a need to:

- Understand that the reactions of children and young people to the pandemic may vary
- Ensure the presence of a sensitive and responsive caregiver
- Think 'physical distancing' and promote 'social contact'
- Provide age-appropriate information
- Create a safe physical and emotional environment by practising the 3R's: Reassurance, Routines and Regulation
- Keep children and young people busy
- Increase the self-efficacy of children and young people
- Create opportunities for caregivers (which may mean YOU) to take care of themselves
- Seek professional help if children or young people show signs of trauma that do not resolve relatively quickly
- Emphasize strengths, hopes and positivity

The following resources may be helpful, review the resources and select the approach that will be of most benefit to the child or young person you are supporting:

- **CBBC: Video and Questions** <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51861089>
- **BrainPOP: Coronavirus** (4-minute video, activities, and games)
- **National Public Radio: Just for Kids: A Comic Exploring the New Coronavirus**
- **PBS Kids: How to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus** (includes a list of videos, games, and activities about handwashing and staying healthy at the bottom of the article)
- **Anna Freud: Self-Care and Coping Strategies** <https://www.annafreud.org/selfcare/>
- **ELSA: Coronavirus Story for Children**
<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/coronavirus-story-for-children/>
- **Young Minds: Feeling Anxious about Coronavirus**
<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus>
- **Useful booklet to explain Covid19 to children** https://660919d3-b85b-43c3-a3ad-3de6a9d37099.filesusr.com/ugd/64c685_319c5acf38d34604b537ac9fae37fc80.pdf