

Your child has most likely heard something about coronavirus (COVID-19). Often times, limiting information from children can create additional worry. One way to reduce this worry and reassure your child is to provide honest and simple information. Here are a few suggestions to guide you when discussing this situation with your family:

### Provide Honest and Simple Information

- Consider your child's age, personality and development when sharing information.
- To help clarify any misconceptions, begin by asking what your child already knows.
- Ways to introduce the illness may be, "The coronavirus is a bit like the flu. It can cause fevers and coughing and can spread from person to person in different ways."
- It is okay to admit if you don't know the answer to a question. Suggest looking up the answer together if appropriate.

### Reassure Your Child

- Reduce worry by explaining what adults are doing to help, "Since this is a new virus, scientists and doctors are learning as much as they can to keep everyone safe."
- Instead of telling your child not to worry, validate their feelings by letting them know it is okay to feel that way. Suggest working together to identify coping options that have worked in the past.
- Your child may hear things that are untrue or exaggerated which can increase fears. Reassure your child that they can come to you to ask questions. You may also want to monitor exposure to media outlets.
- Help your child understand why some people are wearing masks. You can say something like, "Some people are wearing a mask over their nose and mouth. This is to help protect you from their germs when they cough or sneeze. This does not always mean they have coronavirus."
- Explain that if someone in your family becomes sick, a doctor will work to get them feeling better again.
- If your child's daycare, school or activities are closed or cancelled, help explain that it is to keep everyone as healthy and safe as possible and that it is only temporary.

### Give Your Child a Sense of Control

- Help your child understand why they should wash their hands after sneezing, coughing, blowing their nose or using the toilet. When reinforcing handwashing suggest they choose a song to sing that lasts 20 seconds.
- Encourage your child to take part in age appropriate self-care and ask them ways they can stay as healthy as possible.
- In the event of closures, consider creating a list of activities to do at home together. As much as possible, keep routines going especially around mealtime and bedtime.
- Let your know child that as you hear more information, you will let them know.

### Watch For Changes in Behavior

- Your child may respond differently depending on their age and development. Educate yourself on some of the reactions that might occur along with ways you can support your child.
- If you become increasingly concerned about your child's behaviors or emotions, please contact your child's primary care physician.
- For additional information on how to best support your child, consider the following resources
- <https://www.nctsn.org/>
- <https://www.nasponline.org/>
- <https://childmind.org/>