

# COVID-19

## How to talk to your child about COVID-19

### Don't be afraid to discuss COVID-19

- Most children will have already heard about the virus or seen people wearing face masks. Parents shouldn't avoid talking about it.
- Not talking about something can actually make children worry more. Look at the conversation as an opportunity to convey the facts and set the emotional tone. Try to help your child feel informed by giving them fact-based information. This is likely more reassuring than whatever they're hearing from other sources.

### Answer questions simply and truthfully

- Don't volunteer too much information, as this may be overwhelming. Instead, try to answer your child's questions.
- Do your best to answer honestly and clearly. It's okay if you can't answer everything; being available to your child is what matters.

### Take your cues from your child

- Invite your child to tell you anything they may have heard about COVID-19, and how they feel.
- Give them ample opportunity to ask questions. Be prepared to answer (but not prompt) questions. Your goal is to avoid encouraging frightening fantasies

### Make sure you are in a good headspace before you talk to your child

- If you are feeling anxious or panicked, this isn't the time to talk to your children about what's happening with COVID-19.
- If you notice that you are feeling anxious take some time to calm down before trying to have a conversation or answer your child's questions.

### Be reassuring

It is helpful to reassure your child about COVID-19 and reassure them that children actually seem to have milder symptoms

### Think about how you're staying safe

- An important way to reassure children is to emphasise the safety precautions you are taking.
- Children feel empowered when they know what to do to keep themselves safe.
- The CDC recommends thoroughly washing your hands as the primary means of staying healthy.

- Remind children that they are taking care of themselves by washing their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds (or the length of two “Happy Birthday” songs). This is important when they come in from outside, before they eat, and after blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing or using the bathroom.

### Stick to routine

- Staying grounded in routines and predictability is going to be helpful right now.
- This is particularly important if your child’s school or child care is impacted.
- Make sure you are taking care of the basics just like you would during school holidays.
- Structured days with regular mealtimes and bedtimes are an essential part of keeping children happy and healthy.

### Keep talking

Tell children that you will continue to keep them updated as you learn more.

Let them know that the lines of communication are going to be open. You can say, ‘Even though we don’t have the answers to everything right now, once we know more, we will let you know.’

*Reference:* This information has been sourced from the Child Mind Institute. Attributing Dr Janine Domingues, PHD and Dr Jamie Howard, PHD.

### Further resources

For more information, please visit [education.tas.gov.au/COVID-19](https://education.tas.gov.au/COVID-19).

If you have any questions, please speak with your school or contact the Department of Education COVID-19 Support Hotline at [COVID19support@education.tas.gov.au](mailto:COVID19support@education.tas.gov.au) or on 1800 816 057.