

# TALKING TO YOUR SCHOOL-AGED CHILD About Coronavirus

With the COVID-19 pandemic, your children are adjusting to new routines. They may miss their friends and teachers at school. They may be new to online learning. As a parent, you may be juggling getting your work done, helping your children with their schoolwork and other responsibilities.

## STAY CALM AND REASSURING

- 
- Children will follow your lead about how to react and how anxious they should be.
  - If everyone in your home is well, reassure them that they and your family are fine.
  - If someone in your family is sick, remind them that doctors are working to make them get well, even if it means that they can't visit them or speak with them right now.
  - Remind them that there are lots of adults working to take care of people who are sick and to protect people who are healthy.

## FIND OUT WHAT YOUR CHILD KNOWS AND BE HONEST, ACCURATE, AND AGE-APPROPRIATE WITH YOUR ANSWERS



Older children may have more access to information through the internet, social media and their friends. Some of this information may create more anxiety. Some of this information may not be correct.

- Ask what they have heard and what questions they have. Listen carefully to the words they use and acknowledge their feelings.
- Answer their questions, but don't tell them more than what they want or need to know. Too much information may make them more nervous.
- Explain that a virus is a sickness like a cold or the flu. Most people who get this virus will be sick for a while but will recover and be fine.
- If they ask whether people will die, explain that some people will die, mostly people who are very old or sick with other things, but most people will get well.
- Explain how the virus spreads from one person to another:
  - By getting too close to someone who is sick or getting sick.
  - By touching a surface that someone who is sick recently touched.
- Remind them that your family can do things to keep everyone healthy:
  - Wash your hands frequently and for 20 seconds with soap and water (try singing the ABCs).
  - Use hand sanitizer if no soap and water are available.
- Stay at home or in your yard.
- When outside of your home, keep 6 feet of distance from other people. *To help, imagine there is a full-size couch between you!*
- If sneezing or coughing, use a tissue and throw it away immediately. If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your elbow. Then make sure to wash your hands again!
- Get enough sleep, eat healthy food, get exercise and connect with friends and family by phone or video.
- Don't blame others. Viruses can make anyone sick no matter where they come from or what they look like. Don't make assumptions about who is sick.



## LISTEN AND BE AVAILABLE

- 
- Let them know that you love them and will take care of them ("I know this feels scary. I will take care of you.")
  - Give them extra affection.
  - Pay attention to signs of anxiety such as being extra cranky, needing more attention or acting babyish.
  - Remind them they can always ask you questions or tell you their feelings.

## KEEP UP YOUR ROUTINE—FOR SCHOOLWORK AND IN GENERAL

- 
- Keep a normal routine as much as possible, including the same bedtimes and wake up times, but be flexible when anyone is overwhelmed or needs some extra attention or relaxation.
  - Your child's school has probably set up lesson plans and resources for you to use at home. Try to set aside the same time each day for schoolwork. Give plenty of breaks—it is important to not expect them to sit in front of screens or do work all the time, and it is important to give yourself a break too.
  - Prince George's County Public Schools has posted some [recommended activities](#) that can be downloaded and completed on paper or accessed online.

## MONITOR MEDIA USE

- 
- Limit their access to screentime, especially information about the virus.
  - Try to avoid watching or listening to information about the virus when your child is around. Try not to let your child overhear you talking to others about the virus - this may make them more nervous.
  - Talk with older children about how stories about the virus might be based on rumors and inaccurate information.

## MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

- 
- It is not reasonable to expect this time to be the same as school. What matters most is that children have an opportunity to work on a few tasks each day because it helps to create a routine, which is comforting.
  - Household chores and the overall state of the house may look and feel different. Everyone is home all of the time, and when we are stressed, it takes longer to complete tasks. Don't be too hard on yourself if some things are left undone or done differently.
  - These are unusual times. Our expectations for how this will work might not be entirely realistic. It is important to give yourself and your family members grace.