Talking with Your Kids about COVID-19

Please use the following information and resources to support your children and family through this time of stress and unknown. Children may respond differently to this pandemic depending on their age (see table).

- The Child Life and Art Therapy Program at Randall Children's Hospital

Remain Calm and Provide Reassurance
- Children often pick up on the feelings and emotions of adults around them, the calmer we are, the calmer they are
- Reassure children they are safe and will be taken care of
- Reassure children that it is normal to feel stressed during times of change

Provide Opportunities to Talk and Listen
- Check in with children to see how they are doing emotionally
- Encourage open communication between you and the child
- Children often have big feelings but limited words to express them, use open ended questions to engage conversations
- If you are asked a question you do not know the answer to, be honest and suggest an opportunity to learn together

Help Children Feel in Control
- Keep as much of a routine as possible, routines make things predictable and allow for a sense of control
- Provide them with appropriate choices when able
- Assign simple tasks around the house (doing dishes, picking up their room, helping with pets or cooking)

Child Friendly Definition of Common Terms
- Virus: A type of germ that gets inside your body and can make you sick
- Germs: Germs are tiny organisms, or living things, that can cause disease. They are so tiny you need a microscope to see them.
- Contagious: This is when a virus can jump from one person to another through things like coughs, sneezes, and contact with others. It is important to wash your hands and cover your nose/mouth when you sneeze/cough to help from spreading contagious illnesses.

Definitions from www.kidshealth.org

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Friendly Reminder: Encouraging good hand washing practices will empower children to help during this time of stress.

Developmentally Appropriate Ways to Help Children Cope with the Coronavirus (COVID-19)		
	Reactions	**How to Help**
Preschool (Ages 3-5)	• Fear of being alone, nightmares • Speech difficulties • Loss of bladder/bowel control, constipation, bed-wetting • Change in appetite • Increased temper tantrums, whining, or clinging behaviors • Sleep pattern changes	• Patience and tolerance • Provide reassurance (verbal and physical) • Encourage expression through play, reenactment, storytelling • Allow short-term changes in sleep arrangements • Plan calming, comforting activities before bedtime • Maintain regular family routines • Avoid media exposure • Plan calming, comforting activities before bedtime
School-Age (Ages 6-12)	• Irritability, whining, aggressive behavior • Clinging, nightmares • Sleep/appetite disturbance • Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches, etc.) • Withdrawal from peers, loss of interest • Competition for parents' attention • Forgetfulness • Increased statements of worry or fear	• Staying in touch with friends through video chat or phone calls. • Regular exercise and stretching • Engage in educational activities (workbooks, educational games) • Participate in structured household chores • Set gentle but firm limits • Follow the child's lead and need for information when discussing current outbreak. Encourage child to ask questions. Provide short answers and allow child to ask further questions if necessary. Do not bombard with information. • Encourage expression through play and conversation • Maintain family routines • Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school • Address any stigma or discrimination occurring and clarify misinformation • Reward positive behaviors often

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Developmentally Appropriate Ways to Help Children Cope with the Coronavirus (COVID-19)		
	Reactions	**How to Help**
Adolescent (Ages 13-18)	• Physical symptoms (headaches, rashes, etc.) • Sleep/appetite disturbance • Agitation or decrease in energy • Ignoring health promotion behaviors • Isolating from peers and loved ones	• Patience, tolerance, and reassurance • Encourage continuation of routines • Encourage discussion of outbreak experience with peers and family • Staying in touch with friends through video chat or phone calls. • Participate in family routines, including chores, supporting younger siblings, and planning strategies to enhance health promotion behaviors • Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school • Address any stigma or discrimination occurring and clarify misinformation
Children with special needs	Reactions will likely be based on the child's developmental level and may include a combination of the symptoms above depending on your child's developmental age. Most, if not all of these symptoms should respond to the strategies above	• Provide increased access to comforting measures and sensory needs • Offer factual information and short clear answers to questions within child's scope of understanding • Limit preoccupation with becoming ill by introducing factual information ('children are not at high risk, it is very unlikely you will get ill, school is out to continue to protect kids')

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Websites, Activity Books, and Videos about COVID-19

Zero to Three Years

Answering Your Young Child's Questions About Coronavirus
https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3265-answering-your-young-child-s-questions-about-coronavirus?fbclid=IwAR3TqMZ27FbZ7seCUFZ-A4fgs5rZUfed7-H38Ur5YCxUIJjiPXuQXG2sRPk

Caring for Each Other – Sesame Street
Talking with your child about COVID-19, self-care, creating routines, and a "video chat" with Elmo.
https://www.sesamestreet.org/caring?fbclid=IwAR32Si0nsmsTxHxrTBDLHqBG-qT7bi13E1oBUTApGWd0d_IYNPIUcL8krz4

How to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus
https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-coronavirus

Wash Your Hands Song | CoComelon Nursery Rhymes & Kids Songs
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emy_SBGqLLA

#COVIBOOK Supporting and reassuring children around the world (In multiple languages)
Created by Manuela Molina to support and reassure children, specifically under the age of 7, regarding COVID-19.
https://www.mindheart.co/descargables

Preschool and Older

A kids book about COVID-19 by Malia Jones
In response to the extraordinary spread of COVID-19 we created a completely FREE resource to help kids and grownups everywhere learn more about COVID-19. *Free PDF & eBook download.*
https://akidsbookabout.com/pages/covid-19

At-Home Activity Guide
"Play promotes healthy development, even when you're stuck at home."
https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3264-at-home-activity-guide

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BrainPOP Coronavirus Video
It can be scary to hear about a disease outbreak but learning the facts can help ease your mind. Find out more about how viruses work, and the best ways to prevent them from infecting more people. Viruses can't spread without our help, so click play to learn how *not* to help them!
https://www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus/

Dr. Panda TotoTime – Coronavirus Outbreak | How to protect yourself | Kids Learning Cartoon | Dr. Panda TotoTime
In this special episode, kids will learn about the 2019 novel coronavirus and the good habits to adopt to protect themselves from it with Dr. Panda & Toto.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkUlCIFE45M

"I Have a Question About Coronavirus" Free Download
This resource is written for children with Autism but is nice simple language for most children to understand.
https://www.ihaveaquestionbook.com/

How to talk with kids about Coronavirus – The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (also in Spanish and Chinese)
Provides information for parents and caregivers about infectious disease outbreaks in your community. Knowing important information about the outbreak and learning how to be prepared can reduce stress and help calm likely anxieties. This resource will help parents and caregivers think about how an infectious disease outbreak might affect their family— both physically and emotionally—and what they can do to help their family cope.
https://www.nctsn.org/resources/parent-caregiver-guide-to-helping-families-cope-with-the-coronavirus-disease-2019

The coronavirus explained to children – Eurac Research YouTube Video
"A short and simple video animation explaining why children should stay at home during these weeks of the coronavirus outbreak."
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVvVTDhGqaA

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Resources for Caregivers:

2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) – healthychildren.org
https://healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/2019-Novel-Coronavirus.aspx

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Coronavirus (COVID-19)
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

Coronavirus (COVID-19): How to Talk to Your Child – KidsHealth
Your kids are hearing about coronavirus (COVID-19). You want to make sure they get reliable information – and you want them to hear it from you.
https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/coronavirus-how-talk-child.html

How to Talk to Your Kids about COVID-19 – Psychology Today
7 practical steps for helping your children feel safe, not scared
https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hope-resilience/202003/how-talk-your-kids-about-covid-19

World Health Organization Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Pandemic Updates
https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

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