

Talking with Children about Coronavirus

There's a lot of news coverage about the outbreak of COVID-19 and it can be overwhelming for parents and frightening to kids. Here are some common questions children might ask, and suggested talking points help children understand the coronavirus and reassure them on how to stay safe:

What is coronavirus?

- There is a new sickness going around called COVID-19 (or coronavirus) that has gotten many people sick in different parts of the world.

Why are people so worried about germs right now?

- Germs are teeny-tiny specks that we can't see, but they can jump to other people easily and make people sick.
- People are worried about the germs that cause COVID-19 because they can spread very easily.

What happens to people who get sick with coronavirus?

- People who get sick with COVID-19 get a big cough, a fever (they feel really hot) and they may have to work harder to breathe.
- Most people who get sick only get minor (or little) symptoms, like a cold. They can stay home so they don't spread germs to other people.
- Some people might need extra help to get better, and doctors and hospitals are ready to help them. Luckily, there are lots of things we can do to help not spread germs and keep people healthy.

What can we do to keep people healthy?

- We can spread germs when we sneeze or cough and forget to cover our mouth, if we share straws or drinks and if we forget to wash our hands after going to the bathroom.
- We can help keep our family and friends healthy with a Stay Healthy Plan:
 - Wash our hands while we sing a song, for at least 20 seconds
 - Use a tissue to cover our cough or sneeze (and put it in the trash, then wash our hands)
 - Avoid touching our face (nose, mouth, eyes) when we didn't just wash our hands
 - Stay home if we feel sick
 - Skip doing high fives or shaking hands
 - Give space to people who may get sick from COVID-19 easily
 - Stay away from really big groups
 - Doctors and scientists are also working hard to learn more about how to keep us all healthy

Am I going to get sick?

- Most kids aren't getting sick from COVID-19 so far. But they can spread the germs to other people, so it's important that we keep practicing our Stay Healthy Plan.
- If kids do get sick with this virus, it may be similar to when you had that bad cough a few weeks ago. You would need to stay home and rest if you did get sick.

Are you (mommy/daddy) going to get sick?

- Mommy and daddy are healthy and we are working hard to keep our home clean so the germs don't spread here. We have every reason to think we can stay healthy.
- If we do get sick, we would stay home so we don't spread the germs to other people, and our doctors would be able to help us get better.

Are grandma/grandpa/aunts/uncles going to get sick?

- People who are older or whose bodies are already sick are more likely to get sick from COVID-19.
- These are the really important people that we want to help to protect, and there are good doctors who can help them if they need it.
- We can use our Stay Healthy Plan to help keep our family safe, too.

What is Social Distancing?

- Germs with the virus that causes COVID-19 spread quickly. Social Distancing is when healthy people choose to avoid crowded places, skip activities we don't have to go to and try to keep space between ourselves and other people.
- Social distancing is a strategy to help SLOW DOWN the spreading – helping fewer people to get sick.

Why did this event I was so excited about get canceled?

- Some really fun events are getting canceled so this virus will get fewer people sick.
- It's okay to feel disappointed and sad if we have to miss something we really wanted to do.
- AND – we can focus on some other really fun things that we don't usually get to do, like working on that new craft project we got, teaching you to cook your favorite dinner, having a family game night and you can teach me your new soccer skills in our backyard.