

## Talking to our children about the Coronavirus

Many of us will have already had conversations about what is going on. After all life has changed considerably and so very quickly and it is hard to ignore.

However, questions will come up from time to time, and it may be that your child hasn't yet asked any questions at all. Children are all different and cope with things in lots of different way.

Try to tune in to your child, have they got questions but don't know how to ask or maybe they are very sensitive to the stress we are all under and don't like to ask to add to their parents' worries. They might be the ones who are struggling the most so them chance to talk about it.

Sometimes the best time to chat is during play or drawing. You may well find you can work out your child's feelings by what they draw or play.

Here are a few tips for dealing with things that arise and how to explain

1. Be honest but keep it simple. For example, 'Coid-19 is a virus a lot like when people get flu. Some people don't get any symptoms and feel fine, some people have some symptoms which are not too bad (briefly describe the symptoms) and a small number of people get very poorly and could die". We need to keep ourselves safe and not spread it around to other people. Include the hand washing advice.
2. Acknowledge that they have questions and worries. Sometimes we try to protect children buy telling them they shouldn't be worried. It's ok to say things such as
  - "I can see you feel worried. I feel confused and worried sometimes too because things have changed so quickly".
  - "I am not sure what is going to happen in the next few weeks, but we will learn together. I do know that one day it will be all over and we will be able to go back to normal "
  - "You can always ask me questions; I might not always know the answers but I will do my best:"

If you find that questions about the virus are coming all the time despite you answering as best you can, then it is ok to limit the times that your child can ask. You need to protect your own sanity too! This might be an issue if your child is on the autism spectrum. So, for instance, let them ask questions for one specified hour in the day only or for half an hour in the morning & evening.

3. Be aware if you feel that your own anxieties are building. Sometimes we think we are protecting our children but we don't realise that they are superstar mood detectives!
4. Older children may be hearing a lot of fake news about the virus. Some of this could be causing them to become even more anxious. Be clear what is fact, i.e. what we are told directly by our medical professionals, and what is just people trying to get a reaction or 'likes' on social media. Be clear in allaying their fears.

Always remember that you don't have to be the perfect parent with this. We are all learning as we go along. Being open and honest and noticing what your child is feeling will go a long way.