

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Helping Children Cope

Children may respond differently to an outbreak depending on their age. Below are some reactions according to age group and the best ways you can respond.



Reinforcing good hand hygiene practices will help empower children about what they can do to remain healthy

| | Reactions 😊 | How to Help ❤️ |
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|  <p>Preschool</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 bed time |
|  <p>School-age (Ages 6-12)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritability, whining, aggressive behavior • Clinging, nightmares • Sleep/appetite disturbance • Physical symptoms (headaches, stomach aches, etc.) • Withdrawal from peers, loss of interest • Competition for parents' attention • Forgetfulness • Increased statements of worry or fear | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience, tolerance, and reassurance • Play sessions and staying in touch with friends. • 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 |
|  <p>Adolescent (13-18)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical symptoms (headaches, rashes, etc.) • Sleep/appetite disturbance • Agitation or decrease in energy • Ignoring health promotion behaviors • Isolating from peers and loved ones • Avoiding/cutting school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience, tolerance, and reassurance • Encourage continuation of routines • Encourage discussion of outbreak experience with peers and family • Stay in touch with friends • 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 |
|  <p>Children with special needs</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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') |