



Supporting Your Young Person Through the Coronavirus Pandemic

With increasing information and concern about the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), children and young people may be feeling a range of emotions such as anxiety, stress, fear, and confusion. As caregivers we play an important role in helping children make sense of what they hear in a way that helps them to cope with their concerns and take appropriate actions without panicking. The following tips may be helpful when talking to your child or young person.

Normal Reactions

- A range of reactions is normal. Young people may feel scared, confused, helpless, or anxious.
- Young people may have problems sleeping, want more adult attention, become angry for no clear reason, or are afraid to go places (e.g., school).
- These reactions can occur even if they are not at risk of getting sick.

If your young person continues feeling this way for a long period of time, they may need more help coping. See 'Further Support' for details.

Be Calm and Reassuring

- Listen to your child, speak kindly, and reassure them. They may need extra attention from you and want to talk about their concerns, fears, and questions.
- Accept their feelings and tell them it is okay to feel worried, confused, sad, etc.
- Reassure them that if they do get sick, adults are there to take care of them.
- Remember, young people react to how you respond and the things you say to them and others.

Give Accurate, Age-Appropriate Information

- When young people do not have factual information, they may imagine far worse situations.
- Give factual information appropriate for their age/development.
- Allow them to ask questions and answer their questions with age-appropriate information.
- Provide clear information on how the COVID-19 can spread and symptoms, and what they can do to prevent the infection spreading.
- Provide information about what could happen in a reassuring way (e.g., 'someone in our family may not feel well so they may go to the doctor who can help them feel better').

Monitor Media Exposure

- Talk with your young person about how information on the internet and social media may not be true.
- Limit viewing and/or access to information on the internet, social media, and television.
- Be aware that information for adults can cause anxiety and confusion in young people.

Avoid Blame

- Remember that COVID-19 can make anyone sick. Avoid blaming others and making assumptions about who may have COVID-19.

Teach Good Hygiene Practices

Giving information about how to prevent infection can give young people a sense of control, reducing their anxiety and stress. Encourage and teach your child good hygiene including:

- Wash your hands with soap and water multiple times a day for at least 20 seconds (e.g., sing Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star slowly or Happy Birthday twice).
- If coughing or sneezing, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or the bend of your elbow.
- Dispose of the tissue immediately after use and then wash hands.
- Avoid close contact with others if they or others have cold or flu-like symptoms.

Maintain Normal Routines and Encourage Positive Activities

- Keep to normal routines as much as possible,
- Support children to eat healthily, exercise, engage in fun activities, and get enough sleep. This will help them to have a stronger immune system to fight illnesses.

Remaining Home from School

As a precautionary measure to minimise the risk to others we advise that you keep your child home from school if they are exhibiting cold/flu-like symptoms. We are living in a time where extra vigilance is needed, and we ask that you take this in mind when making decisions around your child's health.

Stay Informed

You are encouraged to stay updated about the COVID-19 situation by visiting the following:

- Department of Education: <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/en/home>
- World Health Organisation: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- Western Australian Department of Health: <https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/>

Please contact your GP if you have concerns regarding yourself or a young person being unwell.

Further Support

If you or your family members need additional support, please contact the school who can access supports.

Alternatively, for urgent concerns, contact one of the following (available 24 hours):

- Emergency: 000
- Crisis Care: 9223 1111
- Urgent Mental Health Support Line: 1800 048 636 (support for young people aged under 18 years)
- Mental Health Emergency Response Line: 1300 555 7888 (support for individuals aged 18+ years)
- *Counselling Option (not for urgent concerns)*. Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800, <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>