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How to Talk to Your Kids about Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

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“What is coronavirus?” This is the likely question you are receiving from your children who are starting to recognize the word.

Don't leave your kids in the dark.

“It's really important for parents to be educated on the facts themselves and address any false information quickly,” said [Dr. Michael Chang](#), pediatric infectious disease expert at [Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital](#) and Assistant Professor Of Pediatrics at McGovern Medical School at UTHealth. “Kids are going to hear a lot of different things at school, so parents will also need to keep up to date.”

If you are wondering how to bring up coronavirus in a way that will be reassuring and not alarming to your children, here are some tips from Dr. Chang and the experts at [Memorial Hermann](#).

- **Talk, talk, talk.** Most children will have already heard about the virus or have seen people wearing face masks, so parents shouldn't avoid talking about it. Not talking about something can actually make kids worry *more*.
- **Be age appropriate.** Volunteering too much information may be overwhelming. Instead, try to answer your child's questions by addressing the facts. Answer each question honestly and clearly.
- **Pick the right time.** Find a time when you are not feeling anxious or panicked. Take some time to calm down before trying to have a conversation or answer any questions from your child.
- **Be reassuring.** Hearing about the coronavirus on the news or across social media channels may be enough to make children seriously worry. It's helpful to reassure your child about is the minor symptoms often associated with coronavirus and that [kids actually seem to be less susceptible](#) to it.
- **Focus on facts not fear.** An important way to reassure kids is to emphasize the safety precautions that you are taking. We know that the coronavirus is transmitted mostly through the direct contact with someone who is coughing, sneezing and touching surfaces. The [CDC recommends](#) thoroughly washing your hands as the primary means of staying healthy. So remind kids that they are taking care of themselves by washing their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds (or the length of two “Happy Birthday” songs) when they come in from outside, before they eat, and after blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing or using the bathroom.
- **Stick to your schedule.** Children do not like uncertainty. Stick to your regular schedule as much as possible. This is particularly important if your child's school or daycare shuts down. Structured days with regular mealtimes and bedtimes are an essential part of keeping kids happy and healthy.

- **Lead by example.** Your children will look to you on how to react or respond to this news. Reinforcing the preventive measures and addressing just the facts of the situation will help you and your child navigate through this difficult time.

For more information on COVID-19, please visit <http://www.memorialhermann.org/coronavirus/> or cdc.gov.

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