

# Talking with Your Children/Youth about COVID-19

As you know, the World Health Organization has declared a public health emergency related to COVID-19 (Coronavirus). Concern over the new virus may make children/youth anxious. Acknowledging their concern is appropriate and can result in taking actions that reduce the risk of illness. Helping children/youth cope with anxiety requires providing accurate prevention information and facts without causing undue alarm.

Children and youth often look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events. If the adults seem overly worried, children's anxiety may rise. Moreover, children/youth may repeat or internalize statements and behaviours they see and hear that stigmatize particular groups of people. Teaching children positive preventative measures, talking with them about their fears, reminding them to be kind and respectful toward others, and giving them a sense of control over their risk of infection can help reduce anxiety. Parents and guardians should reassure children/youth that health officials are working to ensure that people throughout the province stay healthy.

Here are some tips to keep in mind when talking with children/youth about COVID-19:

## **Remain calm and reassuring.**

- Children and youth will respond to your verbal and nonverbal reactions.
- Remind them that precautions are being taken to ensure public safety.

## **Be available to listen and talk.**

- Be sure children and youth know they can come to you when they have questions or concerns.

## **Avoid language that might blame others and lead to stigma.**

- It is important to avoid stereotyping any one group of people as responsible for the virus.
- Talk about the danger of making assumptions about who might have COVID-19.

## **Monitor access to social media, television and online.**

- Suggest that children/youth reduce their amount of media time focused on COVID-19.
- Speak to children/youth about how many stories about COVID-19 may be based on rumors or inaccurate information. This is also an opportunity to discuss critical consumption of media.
- Factual information can help to reduce anxiety. Use reputable websites such as the [World Health Organization](https://www.who.int).



## Maintain a normal routine to the extent possible.

- Keep to a regular schedule, as this can be reassuring and promotes overall wellness.

## Provide information that is honest and accurate.

- Give children/youth information that is truthful and appropriate for their age and developmental level.
- For additional factual information, please visit the [GNB Coronavirus website](#).

## Review things that everyone can do to stay healthy and avoid spreading the disease.

- Sneeze or cough into elbow or tissues.
- Dispose of tissues, napkins and wipes.
- Frequently wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- If water is not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 % alcohol.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with hands.
- Stay home when sick.
- Disinfect frequently touched objects.

## Review the symptoms of COVID-19.

- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing



## Additional Resources

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

[Teaching Tolerance: Speaking Up Against Racism Around the New Coronavirus](#)

[World Health Organization: Myth Busters](#)

[World Health Organization: Videos](#)

[Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers During Infectious Disease Outbreaks](#)

Adapted from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)