

Talking to your children and young people about Coronavirus (COVID19)

You may have already been faced with the challenge of talking with children and young people about coronavirus and the evolving situation. Know that there are no right or wrong ways to talk to children and young people about such situations but the following may be helpful to know:

Know that children and young people pick up on more than we may realise or, indeed, want to realise. It is important therefore to be honest with children and young people and answer any questions honestly but appropriately for their age. Children and young people will usually know or find out if you are 'making things up'.

Use words and concepts that children and young people can understand. Think about how hold the child is, the kind of language they will understand and also their developmental age.

Let children and young people know that they can ask questions when they need to and let them know that you think their questions are important and appropriate

Get your own information only from reliable sources such as the NHS.

Remember that children and young people can personalise things – so they may worry about their own safety and that of others they know. This is quite normal. As you reassure them, be mindful too about not making promises but let them know that there are always people helping and doing a lot to help people who may feel poorly.

Children and young people learn from their parents, carers and teachers. They will learn from how you react to news and also from what they hear and see when you are having conversations with others. They will also learn from what you do so you, as the grown up, need to lead by example in your behaviour.

Do not let children and young people watch too much television with frightening images. Such repetition can be confusing and frightening. Children and young people are not able to make sense of information in the same way that we do as adults.

Remember that although we, as adults may follow the news and daily updates with interest and attention, most children and young people just want to be children and young people. They may not want to think about what's happening across the country or elsewhere in the world. They'd rather play or spend time with you.

To help yourself, remember that what we eat and drink when we feel anxious are important. Regular food helps to calm our nervous system while caffeine may leave us feeling more jittery. Alcohol too can act as a depressant and also leave us feeling wobbly. Where you can connect with friends and reach out to check in when you need to. See if you can set up a whatsapp group or facebook group for your local area.