



# Talking to Kids About Coronavirus

Starlight Children's Foundation knows how stressful and scary health emergencies can be for kids. Providing answers to their questions in a way that is honest and simple is key to providing clarity and comfort.

- Ask kids what they've heard. Ask them how they feel.
- Share only the information that they need right now. Answer simply and honestly.
- Offer reassurances and explain the simple things you are doing to be safe.

## Kids Under 5

The explanation should be factual but very simple. Conversations can be as easy as: *In the same way you catch a cold from a friend at school, you stay home to get better. Right now, there is a virus not so different from the viruses that cause colds. It's going around the whole world and, basically, everyone is staying home to try to get better and not pass it to someone else.*

Preschoolers generally don't need much more information. But they may ask the same questions more than once – let them.

## Kids Age 5-10

Meet these kids where they are. Follow steps 1-3 above, and ask them questions: *What made you think of that? Or What do you think the answer might be? Or That's so interesting – I am wondering why you are asking?*

This age can understand a bit more about COVID-19. You can explain: *This is a virus, like the flu or a cold. It's so small it's invisible, so we can't see it and don't always know who has it. We can stay safe by staying 6 feet away from others, wash our hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, don't shake hands, and sneeze or cough into the bend of our arm, vampire style.*

## Tweens and Teens

Middle and high schoolers crave information so that they can act on it. Share articles explaining how coronavirus works, how it is spread, and what people can do to protect one another.

Discuss social responsibility with them. Have a conversation about how they can protect and help others- neighbors, healthcare workers and others (including kids!) who are immunocompromised and in the hospital, not able to be with their family due to the current restrictions.

## Most Importantly

- Answer the question your child is asking with a simple and straightforward answer: you don't need to give too much information.
- It's okay to say that you don't know. Go through the process of seeking out information together, or talking it through.
- Highlight what you and your family can do to stay safe, from staying home to washing your hands to covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
- Be compassionate with your child – and yourself. We are all going through a stressful time and simply listening to and acknowledging your child's questions and feelings goes a long way towards building trust and resilience in your relationship.