



Conversations with Children and Young People about the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak

Introduction

News of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is everywhere, including in our schools and playgrounds. Our children and young people may worry more when kept in the dark or rely on sources of information from their peers and social media which may not be accurate.

It is important to support our children and young people during this time, including reassuring them with open and honest communication appropriate to their age and temperament.

How they may respond

Not all children and young people respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch out for include:

- Increased levels of frustration or irritability
- Young children may return to behaviour they had previously outgrown such as thumb sucking, bed wetting or tantrums
- Some younger children may feel more attached and want to avoid separation from their parents / caregivers
- Expressions of fear, worry or anger
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Difficulty concentrating or maintaining focus
- Excessive crying
- Acting out
- Avoiding school
- Unexpected headaches

How to support a child

Parents and caregivers should discuss the news in an open and honest way. Take the time to speak with your children. Listen to any questions they may have and respond to these with accurate information appropriate to their age and temperament.

Some children may express fear or worry about contracting the virus, or fear of their loved ones becoming unwell. Let them know they are safe and it's normal to feel concerned.

Limit exposure to the news, including via social media. Continue to check in on your children to assess their access to new information and correct this if required.



Support the child or young person to find a positive way to express their emotions, using art, music or activities. Children can feel relieved in they can express distressing or challenging feelings in a safe environment.

Children and young people may react in a similar way to those around them, including copying the responses of their parents. Remaining calm and confident can assist to role model responses to them.

Teach your child or young person hand and respiratory hygiene and foster this behaviour in the home environment.

Where possible maintain family routines and structure including activities the child or young person enjoys.

Support is Available

Common reactions to distress in children will fade without the need for professional support. However, if your child is prone to excessive worry or anxiety, Acacia EAP can assist. Reach out so we can link you in with a clinician experienced in supporting children or young people.

**Acacia EAP offers support 24/7/365
1300 364 273**