

Supporting Children During COVID-19



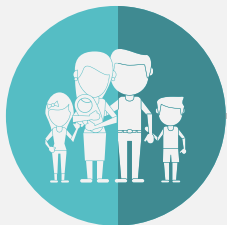
With most schools and workplaces closing you may have found yourself at home with the kids every day and may be facing new challenges associated with this. For most parents, the spread of COVID-19 has led to a shift in reality and having to cope with a 'new normal.' It is likely that you'll be unable to do all the things that you have done in the past to care for your children, as nationwide social distancing measures have been put in place to limit the spread of the virus. It's important that you go easy on yourself and be honest about what is achievable for your family. It is also really important that you are still taking care of yourself.

As a parent, you are likely coping with the increased demands of trying to educate and entertain your children in different ways. This can be even more difficult if you're a single parent, taking care of children with complex needs, experiencing financial hardship, stress, worried about how the virus will affect your loved ones or other difficulties.

For children, life has also changed dramatically, with many staying home from school or day-care and also unable to go to playgrounds, play weekend sports, and see friends or family members anymore. Understanding the changes that are happening because of the virus may be difficult for them, so they will be drawing information from what they observe at home, media and friends. However, it is important to remember that children are resilient and there are many steps you can take to support them during this crisis.

Managing the day-to-day care of your children while social distancing may seem impossible in this unprecedented time we are all experiencing, so remember to go easy on yourself. It is important that you set realistic expectations and communicate these with your partner, children, employers, and other family members and friends. You may need to accept that more screen time is inevitable, and this might help ease the burden a little. Before talking to your children, especially younger ones, try to be aware of, and take care of, your own wellbeing and anxiety.

How to speak with your children about Covid-19:



Speaking Calmly and Honestly with them

While you don't need to shield your children from everything, it is important to choose words carefully, talk about the virus in an age appropriate way that they can understand. Children will pick up on your worry, so remain calm when explaining how the virus can make people feel unwell like they have the cold or flu

Encourage them to Ask Questions

Follow your child's lead, some may be curious and other's may not be and that is okay. Children may naturally worry that they may get sick or that you will. You can reassure your children that you're doing everything to keep the family healthy and that hospitals are working very hard to make sure that people who get sick, can get better. Let them know that you will always be there to support them and answer any questions or worries they have.

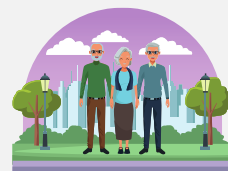


Emphasise the Things the Family has Control Over

Talk about hand-washing as a way to keep your family healthy, as well as the importance of keeping our distance from other people and coughing and sneezing into elbows. You can also make hand-washing fun by choosing different songs to sing that last for about 20 seconds (i.e. singing happy birthday). It's not a stretch to say that by doing all of these things, they're helping to protect everyone in Australia – which kind of makes them a superhero!

Provide Reassurance

Current information suggests that children are relatively safe from the virus. You can let your child(ren) know that most people who get sick will be healthy again and that kids don't seem to get as sick as adults. It is important to remind them that staying home and staying healthy is about protecting people in the community who aren't well and who may get very sick from the virus.



Keep the Conversation Open

It is important to keep checking in with your child(ren) and to help them think through the stories they hear about the virus. You can use this as a way to encourage other news and non-news topics of conversation.

If you are concerned about your child(ren), remember to seek additional help if needed.

- Bite Back: www.biteback.org.au
- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 or visit www.kidshelpline.com.au
- Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636 or visit www.beyondblue.org.au
- Headspace: www.headspace.org.au/eheadspace
- Brave online: www.brave-online.com