

Coronavirus - Mental Health and Coping

For Parents:

Children react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

Not all children respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for in children:

- Excessive crying and irritation.
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (e.g., toileting accidents or bedwetting).
- Excessive worry or sadness.
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits.
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors.
- Poor school performance or avoiding school.
- Difficulty with attention and concentration.
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past.
- Unexplained headaches or body pain.
- Use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs.

There are many things you can do to support your child:

Take time to talk with your child about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and share facts about COVID-19 in a way that your child can understand.

Reassure your child that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.

Limit your child’s exposure to media coverage of the event. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.

Help your child to have a sense of structure. Once it is safe to return to school or child care, help them return to their regular activity.

Be a role model; take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members and rely on your social support system.