



Coronavirus disease COVID-19

– Recommendations in relation to children

How to talk about the coronavirus with children? What to do at home with children? What helps?

Briefly:

1. **Calm yourself and prepare yourself.**
2. **Promote a sense of safety, serve as emotional support.**
3. **Find out what your child knows and what sources of information he/she uses.**
4. **Identify the child's concerns.**
5. **Explain and communicate with the child. Provide adequate information on the essential facts and possibilities of protection.**
Limit the media burden.
6. **Set up a plan.**
7. **Focus on activity.**
8. **Maintain social contacts with others.**
9. **Do not neglect physical activity.**
10. **Be a good example yourself.**

1. **Organize and calm yourself first, before talking. Write down what you and your child will talk about.**

Before talking to your child, calm down, get the main points as to what you will ask about and what information you want to give. Keep in mind that children read out our emotions, and the way we act in front of them shapes the way they will understand the information we deliver. The child is our mirror, so it is very important for him/her to perceive us as calm individuals feeling safe. Therefore, watch your nonverbal communication. Do not discuss serious matters of adults over the heads of children since children often recognize it sensitively, even if they may not show it. By writing down the main points, you gain stability, perspective and structure, and you avoid unwanted emotions that might scare the child. In addition, you will not forget anything.

2. **Increase his/her sense of safety. Make sure he/she does not have to worry.**

Embrace the child. Tell him/her you love him/her. Explain to him/her that he/she does not have to worry, that he/she is safe. Do not let the situation scare you and do not scare the child yourself. Focus on positive feelings, maintain a positive mood. When the child sees a stable parent, he/she will also be stable.

3. **Find out what your child already knows about the coronavirus and what he/she wants to ask about.**

Ask the children. Ask them what they were told about the coronavirus at school, what they talk about with friends, where they get information from. Refute hoaxes, rumours and misinformation. Give the child room for his/her own questions.

4. **Map out the fears and insecurities of the child.**

In addition to what he/she thinks about the coronavirus, find out what his/her feelings are, what his/her worries and fear result from. Explain to him/her that what is happening (e.g. the school closed, restriction on events, quarantine) is part of prevention. This is to prevent people from getting massively and suddenly ill, and to keep the disease under control. Explain that this is how people defend themselves together. Make sure to explain that the child is not in danger of life, that he/she is not in a risk group.

5. **Explain basic facts to the child, such as what the coronavirus is and how we can protect ourselves. Protect children from excessive media influence.**

Carefully select your sources of information before talking with the child and answering his/her questions. Do not let tabloids or conspiracy websites shape your views. Websites of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health provide information that is verified and updated. Depending on your child's age, choose appropriate words, do not dramatize, say that this is a new disease for which a cure is being sought, and that we already know procedures how to reduce the possibility of infection. Use graphic expressions. Emphasize the importance of maintaining hygiene, carefully and often washing hands, not touching the mouth, eyes and nose. That this is essential to reduce the risk of infection. Practise repeatedly hand washing with your child. Be an example to children how to behave responsibly. Keep your vitamin intake, have enough sleep, stay in a good mood – this will help boost your immunity and mental resilience.

6. **Set up a schedule for the day as well as a weekly plan.**

It will help the child and yourself. Explain to the child that this is not just an additional day off but that there are duties to fulfil as well. You can schedule your child's time for games, mutual communication, household help, and learning and writing homework. Do not overload the child, but structuring time is important for his/her mental stability.

7. **Focus on active way of spending time.**

Explain to the child that you also have some limitations, such as having to work from home. At the same time, the child can also perform school duties from home. Communicate with the school in this respect. Make sure the child does not spend long hours watching TV or on his/her mobile phone. Performing activities helps to overcome the strain. In your planning, alternate rest and activity. If you are at workplace and the child is at home alone, maintain a regular telephone contact with him/her.

8. **Keep children in social contact and communicate with the family and friends.**

Let children make phone calls and share their feelings. With the family members and friends, you can keep in touch in person, via Skype or social networking groups, etc. **Do not take children into new, bigger groups of people – less is more.** Keep in mind that the higher the concentration of people, the greater the risk of infection.

9. **Remember that physical activity is important.**

Therefore, go out with your children or exercise with them at home, letting them discharge excess energy. Alternate relaxation and appropriate exercise, strengthen the body and mind.

10. **Be an example to children in responsible behaviour.**

It can be about hygiene, about promoting good family relationships, and showing solidarity and helping others.

PhDr. Štěpán Vymětal, Ph.D.

Security Policy Department of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic

- Psychology Section

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