



[\(https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/\)](https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/)



[Home](#) >

[\(https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/\)](https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/)

[I am supporting others](#)

[\(https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/i-am-supporting-others.html\)](https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/i-am-supporting-others.html)

> [Children and young people](#) >

()

[From toddlers to teens: How to talk about the coronavirus](#)

From toddlers to teens: How to talk about the coronavirus

Regardless of how old your children are, there's a helpful way to have the 'COVID-19 conversation'. Here's what you need to know.

Sharing age-appropriate information with your kids about serious situations is important, and if you're wondering how to do that in the coronavirus climate, you're not alone.

One thing's for sure: it's likely they know a little – or a lot – about it already, even if they're small.

"Young children won't have much concept of 'coronavirus' specifically, but they'll know something's happening simply because so many routines are changing," says child and adolescent psychiatrist and former director of Beyond Blue, Professor Brett McDermott.

And while what you choose to say to your kids about coronavirus will depend on their age, McDermott says the process of talking to them is the same.

He suggests these four steps:

- **Start the conversation.** "Kids have an underlying feeling that their parents will protect them, so if you wait for them to raise it, some children may think, 'If my parents won't talk about this, it must be really bad'."
- **Pick your moment.** "Children get anxious when they're taken aside for a chat, so don't turn this into a dedicated event. Instead, choose a time when you're together anyway, for example around the dinner

table, where conversation tends to be free flowing." You could start by asking what they already know about what's currently happening. "Just take care to pick a moment when you're not feeling anxious about this yourself, because anxiety is contagious."

- **Strike the right tone.** "The way you deliver your message is just as important as what you say. Be warm, thoughtful and acknowledge that it's an emotional time, but, without being too brief, deliver what you want to say in a matter-of-fact way."
- **Encourage questions.** Once you've said what you want to, ask if there's anything else they'd like to know. "When kids ask questions, it demonstrates their understanding of the messages you've been trying to get across, and is also an opportunity to address any specific worries they have." Plus, as well as monitoring children's exposure to media reports about coronavirus, try to be with them when they do watch, read or listen to age-appropriate coverage. "That way, they can ask questions about what they hear and you can make sure they understand the content."

Now that you're across how to talk to your children, here are a few tips about what to say, depending on their age.

Young children

Professor McDermott says a little information goes a long way. "And they don't need technical words like 'coronavirus' or even 'virus'," he says. "Normalise it by using an example they already understand, something like, 'You know how in winter, people get coughs, colds and a runny nose more often? Well, this is a bit like that. And while that's all it is for most people, it might be a little bit more serious for older people, so we need to help protect them by using the new Australian superpower – washing our hands!'"

Tweens

Call it what it is – a virus that causes flu-like symptoms. "Then, be clear that while it's like the flu, the difference is we don't have a vaccine or a flu shot yet. And explain that's why keeping our distance from others and washing our hands is important because that's how we stop the virus spreading. It's also important to reassure kids of this age that while this is the situation now, we know it'll get better because very smart people all over the world, including right here in Australia, are working 24 hours on a vaccine. And once that's made, it will protect us."

Teenagers

They've probably been exposed to what's happening in places like Italy and Spain through news and social media, but might not have the ability to process that information. "So as parents, you need to be savvy. Acknowledge that this situation is complex but stress that every country is different and that we have some real advantages here in Australia, including that we've been able to learn from what's happening in other countries and we have one of the best healthcare systems in the world."

Stick with that same message every time you talk to your teenagers rather than feeling you need to update them every time there's a new development. "Being repetitive and consistent in how you talk to teenagers about this can help to protect them from feeling stressed or uncertain, particularly if the situation keeps evolving."

Stay in touch with us

Sign up below for regular emails filled with information, advice and support for you or your loved ones.

Sign me up

(<https://beyondblue.secure.force.com/c19signup/>)

If you need support during the coronavirus pandemic, we're here for you.



Call 1800 512 348

24 hours / 7 days a week



Online forums

24 hours / 7 days a week

(<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/online-forums/staying-well/coping-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>)



(<http://www.facebook.com/beyondblue>)



(<http://www.youtube.com/beyondblueofficial>)



(<https://twitter.com/beyondblue>)



(<http://www.instagram.com/beyondblueofficial>)

> I have coronavirus

(<https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/i-have-coronavirus/managing-your-mental-health-when-you-have-the-coronavirus.html>)

> Impacts on my work

(<https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/impacts-on-my-work.html>)

> Managing my daily life

(<https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/managing-my-daily-life.html>)

> I'm supporting others

(<https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/i-am-supporting-others.html>)

> I need support now

(<https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/i-need-support-now.html>)

Supported by



Funded by



Australian Government
Department of Health

This website has been established to provide information about anxiety, depression and suicide to the Australian community. The website is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. You should seek the advice of an appropriately qualified healthcare professional before making decisions about your own circumstances. You should not disregard professional medical advice, or delay seeking it, because of any information contained on this website.

[Contact us](https://www.beyondblue.org.au/about-us/contact-us)

(<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/about-us/contact-us>)

[Terms of use](https://www.beyondblue.org.au/general/terms-of-use)

(<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/general/terms-of-use>)

[Privacy policy](https://www.beyondblue.org.au/general/privacy-policy)

(<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/general/privacy-policy>)

Copyright © 2020 Beyond Blue Ltd