
Talking to children about Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The Coronavirus pandemic has affected us all in different ways and we may have all kinds of feelings within us. We have different ways of coping in a crisis, and for those of us who have children, there may be additional concerns about how they are coping during this time. This information sheet is for parents with cancer, offering guidance on how to talk to their children about Coronavirus.

Do talk about Coronavirus with your children

It is important to have conversations with your children about Coronavirus. It is very likely that they will have heard/ read about this. Discussing things openly will allow potential misinformation to be corrected and will also give them opportunities to ask questions or express concerns they may have. For some families, there may be explicit discussions about Coronavirus in the context of cancer – they may worry about the impact of Coronavirus on your physical health and treatment.

Follow your children's lead

If your children have not brought up the topic, it may be good to start asking simple questions to find out what they may already know about Coronavirus. Some children may want to spend time talking about Coronavirus, others may not be as interested. That is ok. Let them know that they can always come to you if they want to talk about it.

Be honest

Be honest and answer any questions your children have. Depending on their age and level of understanding, the amount of information you provide will vary. There are no hard and

fast rules to this. Be guided by your parental intuition and what you think are the important things your child needs to know.

The topic of death and dying may come up in conversations. Stick to the facts and use clear language about what you know (avoid euphemisms). It may be useful to break the information down into chunks, so that it is easier for your child to process and understand. If you do not have an answer, it is ok to say, "I don't know". Be reassuring but be careful about promising things that you cannot guarantee.

Help your children focus on what is in their control

The coronavirus pandemic may have added another layer of threat and uncertainty to what you and your family have already experienced as a result of cancer and its treatment. When talking with your children, reassure them that it is natural to feel scared or anxious about the situation, and that many people feel this way.

When we focus all our attention on things that are out of our control (e.g. whether we may contract Coronavirus, what may happen in the future regarding cancer etc.), it can cause us to feel overwhelmed and anxious. It may be helpful to think together about the things that are within your control and how you can do these. Aside from following the government guidelines around infection prevention and control, it can help to identify fun activities for your children and the whole family ([click here for ideas](#)). Are there things that your children can do to help at home and in the wider community?

Keep checking in with your children



The situation is evolving every day and children are likely to pick up different pieces of information. It can be helpful to check in with your children regularly, so that any questions or concerns can be addressed in real time.

Ask for help if necessary

Sometimes it can be difficult to contain our own anxieties, which can make it hard to speak to children about Coronavirus. When this happens, focus on taking care of yourself first, and revisit the conversation with your children later. You may also want to consider speaking to trusted people around you to explore how they can support you with talking to your children.

The information above provides some ideas about how to speak to children about the Coronavirus. Below are some additional book resources which may support you with having these conversations:

- [Free e-book for parents to read with children under the age of 7](#)
- [Free activity book for children to capture their experiences during the pandemic](#)

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This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:

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