



## Ways to Help Kids Cope with Coronavirus (COVID-19) Anxiety

### Meet children's concerns with validation, compassion

- Listen carefully to their concerns and learn where they heard their information. Validate their fears by saying something like, *"It can be frightening when a new illness comes around that we don't know everything about."* Lastly, gently correct any misconceptions they may have heard and encourage them to continue to ask questions.

### Stick to developmentally appropriate facts

- Avoid having adult-level conversations about COVID-19 around children. Answer questions with brief, developmentally appropriate explanations. For example, you might tell a young child, *"Coronavirus is a new type of cold/flu, and so it is important for us to wash our hands more and sneeze in our elbows to keep healthy."*
- Remind children that doctors and other experts around the world are working hard to stop the virus. This can help kids understand that smart, capable people are taking action.

### Reassure kids by empowering them

- Reassure children that they can protect themselves and others by practicing proper hand washing and cough etiquette and taking other healthy steps.

### Look for kid-friendly methods

- Teach kids how long to wash hands for by singing a 20- to 30-second song together, for example, the "ABCs". You can also estimate 20-to-30 seconds of any song the child likes.

### Emphasize kindness

- As always, it is helpful to teach kids to continue to be kind to all people, regardless of their country of origin or their appearance. Kindness is always possible – even when they feel afraid.

### Remember to model positive behavior

- Parents who show good coping skills can help reassure kids that they are safe. After all, kids learn from their parents how to react in new situations.
- Remember that kids make mistakes. If your child accidentally does not wash their hands or does not sneeze into their elbow, gently remind them. Scaring children with the potential consequences of their mistakes is not helpful.

### Watch for behavior changes

- Changes in a child's sleep, appetite, interest in being with friends or leaving the house, or levels of reassurance seeking, as well as excessive hand washing can be signs that more help is needed.

The public is encouraged to go to the Orange County Health care Agency's dedicated website at [www.ochalthinfo.com/novelcoronavirus](http://www.ochalthinfo.com/novelcoronavirus) for the latest updates.

Adapted from CHOC Children's

