

Washington County Department of Education

Coordinated School Health



Talking to Children About COVID-19 (Coronavirus): A Parent Resource

A new type of coronavirus, abbreviated COVID-19, is causing an outbreak of respiratory (lung) disease. While the immediate health risk in the United States is low, it is important to plan for any possible outbreaks if the risk level increases in the future.

Concern over this new virus can make children and families anxious. While we don't know where and to what extent the disease may spread here in the United States, we do know that it is contagious, that the severity of illness can vary from individual to individual, and that there are steps we can take to prevent the spread of infection. Acknowledging some level of concern, without panicking, is appropriate and can result in taking actions that reduce the risk of illness. Helping children cope with anxiety requires providing accurate prevention information and facts without causing undue alarm.

It is very important to remember that children look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events. If parents seem overly worried, children's anxiety may rise. Parents should reassure children that health and school officials are working hard to ensure that people throughout the community stay healthy. However, children also need factual, age appropriate information about the potential seriousness of disease risk and concrete instruction about how to avoid infections and spread of disease. Teaching children positive preventive measures, talking with them about their fears, and giving them a sense of some control over their risk of infection can help reduce anxiety.

Specific Recommendations

- **Remain calm and reassuring.**
- **Be honest and accurate.**
- **Know the symptoms of COVID-19.**
- **Review hand washing and respiratory etiquette.**
- **Clean and disinfect often.**
- **Communicate with your school.**
- **Stay home if sick.**

Information is rapidly changing. To have the most accurate information, stay informed by accessing <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

For additional questions regarding our district, please contact your School Nurse or Coordinated School Health Office.