

Talking to Your Child about COVID-19

High School

The World Health Organization officially declared coronavirus a pandemic. Health experts predict that the virus and its impact on our communities are just beginning.

You play an important role in helping children and teens better understand what's happening and help them manage their own related worries or anxiety.

Here are some tips that can help:

High school students have probably had conversations with their peers and teachers. They might have fears about what this will mean for their own health, schooling, schedule or safety.

- ✔ Questions about health, the economy, and public policy are all legitimate issues for this age group. It is important to discuss these topics with them if they are interested.
- ✔ Acknowledge any worry, anxiety or fear they have and remind them that these feelings are normal.
- ✔ Help guide your teen's worry into things they can do – like learning more about how to prevent the spread of the virus including washing hands, getting lots of sleep, or making concrete plans of what you will do if work or school schedules are disrupted.
- ✔ Some teens may want to block out the whole thing. It may appear that they do not care. This might be masking real worries. Ask questions and be ready to listen. Some teens may make jokes. Humor can be a way to help them cope but discourage them from using humor as the only way to talk about the virus.
- ✔ Stick to the facts in your conversations and talk to your teens about what they see on TV or read online. Point them towards reliable sources of information like the CDC website, www.cdc.gov.
- ✔ Talk through the difference between going online to get informed versus media over-use that can fuel anxiety. Enforce a tech curfew at night and encourage them to take media breaks.
- ✔ Some teens may be very interested in discussing the political or economic implications of the pandemic. Engage them in learning and critical thinking about the coronavirus.
- ✔ Talk about how events like this can surface harmful stereotypes and discrimination against certain people and populations. In this case, talk about the importance of disrupting anti-Asian and xenophobic sentiment in coverage of and response to the coronavirus.
- ✔ Don't use your teen to process your own anxiety. Reach out to other adults to process your fears about the virus or the economic disruptions that it is causing.