

Caring for those who are concerned about the Virus particularly children and young people.

Reports regarding Coronavirus are prevalent in the media and it is natural for children and young people particularly to have questions or concerns in this time of uncertainty. This sheet provides some ideas for consideration when dealing with these concerns with friends, family and children and young people.

Pay attention

It is perfectly normal to have questions about events that are covered in the media, such as the information currently being distributed about Coronavirus.

There is a common misconception that talking with children and young people about such topics may increase their anxiety. However, research suggests that it usually has the opposite effect. For most people, not having information is scary, and many will fill in the blanks with their own imagination. Children often imagine something far worse than the truth. For older children and young adults, they may take to the internet for their answers, which can sometimes become overwhelming or misleading.

Responding to questions

If a child or young person brings up Coronavirus or asks questions, it is important to acknowledge how they may be feeling and to answer questions as honestly as possible. This will help them feel informed and understand what is happening.

Encourage those that are anxious to engage in things that help them to feel better.

Here are some pointers for having a calm conversation with children and young people about Coronavirus and try to ensure that any concerns around the situation is kept at bay.

- Be aware of your own behaviour**

It is important that adults understand the effect their own behaviour can have on children. If you are visibly upset or react in a way that suggests you are fearful, children will take their cues from you. Remain calm in your conversations with children and young people and reassure them that there is no cause for alarm if we follow the guidance of health professionals and Church authorities. Stay home, to stay safe and save lives.

- Present the facts**

Scary headlines attract attention and help sell newspapers, but they don't always tell the whole truth. Ensuring you are armed with facts will help keep conversations calm, considered, and constructive. Key facts can be found on <https://covid19.govt.nz/>
Sharing information should help reassure people that everything is being done to keep us all safe.

- Explain what efforts are being made to contain the virus**

Authorities are responding quickly. Travel in and out of the New Zealand has been restricted, and scientists are working to develop a vaccine. In New Zealand, the government is carefully monitoring and actively managing the situation and the risk to the public here remains very low. We can be confident any confirmed cases will be treated quickly. We are all doing our part by staying in our bubbles to ensure we don't catch or spread the virus.

- Offer practical advice**

The easiest way to reduce the risk of being affected by viruses of any sort (including the common cold) is to cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze (coughing into your elbow is a useful strategy), keep hands clean by washing them regularly with soap and water or an alcohol-based rub, and avoid touching the eyes, nose, and mouth. When traveling on public transport or out and about where physical distancing is restricted wear a mask. These are easy habits for everyone including children and young people to adopt and should help them feel as though they're able to exert some control over their circumstances.

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Communication is important

It is important that the lines of communication always be kept open. Children and young people need to feel informed and safe, especially when they hear so much information in the media.

Discussing the Coronavirus situation openly will provide the opportunity to reassure them that they are safe and dispel any false information they may have heard in the media or through rumours.

Consider the overwhelming media information

There are countless reports and news items about the virus. Social Media is full of stories, facts and non-facts. Consider limiting exposure to the relentless news. You might decide as a family just to listen or watch the news once a day finding other ways to use lockdown time such as watching family favourite movies, going for local bubble walks, making reusable masks (there are many ideas and instructions on line).

