

# How to talk to your children about the Corona Virus

## 1. Deal with the news head-on and talk about it openly and calmly, giving them the facts

- Give them age-appropriate information – take a look at:
  - [BBC Newsround hub](#) – regularly updated with information and advice
  - [#covibook](#) – for under 7s
- Educate them about reliable sources of information and how some stories on social media may be based on rumours or inaccurate information
- Encourage them to take breaks from listening to or reading the news – overexposure isn't helpful

## 2. Encourage questions

- This will give them the confidence to reach out and ask, if they have anything to ask
- Use comforting tones and be honest when answering questions – it's ok if you don't have all the answers
- Allow for repetition – children tend to repeat themselves when they're feeling uncertain or worried, so you might have to answer the same questions more than once as they seek extra reassurance

## 3. Be a role model

- Recognise and manage your own worries first
- Be open about sharing this with pupils – e.g. I'm also finding the news a bit worrying, so I'm doing X which makes me feel calm

## 4. Let them know it's normal to be concerned

- If needed, reassure them that the effects of this virus on healthy young people are very mild

## 5. Promote awareness of our body's immune system

- It's constantly working against germs without us knowing. We can't and don't need to control this process
- Explain that we're taking precautions against this particular germ because it's a new one which our bodies haven't come across before
- Remind them of the benefits of healthy eating, sleep and exercise – which help to fight germs

## 6. Be aware of children with higher levels of anxiety (e.g. those with existing phobias or obsessive-compulsive disorders)

- Get them to do activities such as counting, ordering and sorting tasks which can help with heightened levels of anxiety
- Encourage them to use relaxation techniques such as controlled breathing
- Detect any obsessive or compulsive behaviours early and intervene before they become entrenched patterns of thinking. Do this by challenging unhelpful thoughts and assumptions. Frame worries as situation-specific by relating them to the current situation, which is temporary and unusual

## 7. Keep doing your bit to help children reduce the spread of the virus

- Encourage them to sing 'happy birthday' twice when they're washing their hands