



SHINING WATERS
REGIONAL COUNCIL
The United Church of Canada



Talking with Children about COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

We as adults are often struggling to understand how to process issues that come up in Public Health, and sometimes we have to imagine what it is like for children to process these same issues themselves.

Many children are often not told clearly what is happening in the world, and instead often experience the pain and fear that is attached to public health concerns like COVID-19 (Coronavirus).

Below are some clear directives of how to talk with children about COVID-19 (Coronavirus).

Calmness and Reassurance

- Children recognize both verbal and non-verbal cues, here are some tips about how to begin the conversation.
 - o Recognize how you are breathing as you are talking.
 - o Reassure them that you as a family are taking all the necessary precautions and share what they are.
 - o Let the child share everything they need to share, listen and affirm what they are saying.

Be Ready to Answer with “I don’t know”

- In today’s modern technology we often think we can have the answers all the time at our finger tips, but children will often ask questions that are too difficult to answer right way. Be prepared to say, “I don’t know, but I will work to find out.” Remind yourself to go and find out – check multiple sources.

Avoid Blaming

- Teach about risk through how to mitigate the risk:
 - o Routine handwashing (using songs like: *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* or *Jesus Loves Me* are a good for a time frame.)
 - o Avoid touching mouths, eyes and noses. Do games such as *Simon Says* and help them know that touching their face is not the best during this time.

Building Routine

- It is important for families to build a routine during times where it can feel like life is stagnant.
 - o Encourage a schedule, and stick to it.
 - Build spaces like: Education Time (where you read a book together or watch an educational program), Exploration Time (going outside, while maintaining social isolation, but see what is happening in the garden and as spring begins), and Artistic Time (even just sitting and colouring together is a great way to talk and share).

As an adult with a young person in your life, know the symptoms, which are:

- Fever, Cough, Shortness of Breath, and for some it is like a cold (sore throat, running nose, cough). If you or your child exhibit these symptoms contact your health care provider, currently many do not want you coming to the office, but they will help you assess the risk to yourself, but also to the public.

Most importantly, consider your and your child's mental health wellness. Times like this can be very difficult for a person's mental health – ensure you are taking breaks away from the consistent news updates and parents are finding ways that not only occupy their own time and needs, but also allow themselves time to create space and distance from the constant media outpouring.

Help Lines Include:

Telehealth Ontario – 1.866.797.0000
Toronto Public Health Hotline – 416.338.7600
Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit – 1.877.721.7520
311 Toronto – 416.392.2489

Links:

Public Health Ontario

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus/public-resources>

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

<http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Promos/Novel-Coronavirus#950c52c5-1e1b-4540-954f-cbe6a88aa007>

City of Toronto Public Health – COVID-19

<https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/>