## 

## HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH CORONA VIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19)

**Your children may respond differently to news of an outbreak depending on their age. Below are some reactions according to age group and the best ways you can respond:**

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| AGE GROUP | REACTIONS | HOW TO HELP |
| PRESCHOOL | Fear of being alone, bad dreams  Speech difficulties  Loss of bladder/bowel control, constipation, bed-wetting  Change in appetite  Increased temper tantrums,  whining, or clinging behaviors | Patience and tolerance  Provide reassurance (verbal and physical)  Encourage expression through play, reenactment, story-telling  Allow short-term changes in sleep arrangements  Plan calming, comforting activities before bedtime  Maintain regular family routines  Avoid media exposure |
| SCHOOL-AGE  (ages 6-12) | Irritability, whining, aggressive behavior  Clinging, nightmares  Sleep/appetite disturbance  Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches  Withdrawal from peers, loss of interest  Competition for parents’ attention  Forgetfulness about chores and new information learned at school | Patience, tolerance, and reassurance  Play sessions and staying in touch with friends through telephone and Internet  Regular exercise and stretching  Engage in educational activities (workbooks, educational games)  Participate in structured household chores  Set gentle but firm limits  Discuss the current outbreak and encourage questions. Include what is being done in the family and community  Encourage expression through play and conversation  Help family create ideas for enhancing health promotion behaviors and maintaining family routines  Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school  Address any stigma or discrimination occurring and clarify misinformation |
| ADOLESCENT  (ages 13-18) | Physical symptoms (headaches, rashes, etc.)  Sleep/appetite disturbance  Agitation or decrease in energy, apathy  Ignoring health promotion behaviors  Isolating from peers and loved ones  Concerns about stigma and injustices  Avoiding/cutting school | Patience, tolerance, and reassurance  Encourage continuation of routines  Encourage discussion of outbreak experience with peers, family (but do not force)  Stay in touch with friends through telephone, Internet, video games  Participate in family routines, including chores, supporting younger siblings, and planning strategies to enhance health promotion behaviors  Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school  Discuss and address stigma, prejudice and potential injustices occurring during outbreak |

## SEEKING ADDITIONAL HELP

If you or a loved one is having a difficult time coping with the outbreak and want to seek outside help, there are ways to get that help. For example:

Get support regarding your anxiety or stress by speaking to a trained counselor at SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 or by texting TalkWithUS 66746.

Contact your physician or your insurance company (if they have a consultation line) to ask health-related questions or to seek mental health support.

Learn more ways to help your family. Additional resources can be accessed at: [www.NCTSN.org](http://www.NCTSN.org/)

[www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org/)

[www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/children-faq.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/children-faq.html)

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THE NATIONAL CHILD TRAUMATIC STRESS NETWORK [www.NCTSN.org](http://www.NCTSN.org/) 5

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