

HELPING CHILDREN COPE

Depending on their age, children may react differently to what is happening in response to COVID-19. Below are some reactions children of different ages might have and the best ways you can respond.

GROUP	REACTIONS	HOW TO HELP
PRESCHOOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience and tolerance • Provide reassurance (verbal and physical) • Encourage expression through play, reenactment, storytelling • 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)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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, www.healthychildren.org and www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/children-faq.html

Local help is available, too.

- **Center for Community Resources** can help you access mental health treatment and services. Call 724-914-3058.
- The Washington County **Mental Health Crisis** line is 1-877-225-3567