**An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna**
Department of
Education and Skills

Talking to Children and Young People about COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Advice for Parents and Schools

- Children and young people need factual, age appropriate information about the Covid-19 virus and concrete instruction about how to avoid spreading of the virus. Without the facts, they often imagine situations far worse than reality.

- The posters below are available at this link. There is also a link to a video the Deputy Chief Medical Officer answered some common questions for RTÉ Junior's News 2Day programme here:

- Let the child/young person's questions and their age guide as to how much information to provide:

  o Very **young children** need brief, simple information and reassurance that they are safe and that the people they care about are safe. They may ask '*Will I get sick*' or *'Will granny/grandad die?'*

  o Reassure them that the Government is working hard to ensure that people throughout the country stay healthy.

  o Tell them that not everyone will get the virus and that the vast majority who get it recover fully.

  o **Older children** may need help to separate reality from rumour and fantasy. Either provide or direct them to where they can find accurate, and factual information about the current status of COVID-19. Having such knowledge can help them feel a sense of control.

- Children can feel less anxious and more in control when given guidance on what they can do to prevent infection. Give them this information. Further information is available [here](#).

  o Children and young people look to the adults in their lives to guide them on how to react to worrying and stressful events. If the adults in their lives seem overly worried, their own anxiety may rise.

  o If your child seems upset, worried or anxious, encourage them to talk about what they are thinking and how they are feeling. Help them to understand that it is ok for them to be experiencing a range of thoughts and feelings. It is important to understand their point of view and to work together to create a different and more positive way to look at the situation. For example, if your child is upset that they cannot see their friends, you could say something like 'I understand that you are missing seeing your friends every day. So am I. Why don't we try and find new ways to stay in touch with our friends?'

  o Give them extra attention and time, to talk about their concerns, fears, and questions.

  o Remember they do not always talk about their concerns readily. Watch for clues that they may want to talk, such as hovering around while you do the dishes etc.

  o It is very typical for younger children to ask a few questions, return to playing and then come back with further questions.

- Reassure children and young people that many stories about COVID-19 on the internet may be based on rumours and inaccurate information.

  o Remember factual information about the virus can help reduce anxiety.

  o Avoid constantly monitoring or discussing updates on the status of COVID -19, as this can increase anxiety.

  o Try to limit their access to information on the internet/television/social media that might be upsetting to them.

  o Remind children/young people that no individual or group is 'responsible' for the virus.

- Encourage children/young people to continue with their schoolwork and extracurricular activities, but don't push them if they seem upset or overwhelmed.

- During this time children and young people need your support to create new routines that will keep them busy and give them a sense of control of their lives. This will become more important as time goes on. Routines and schedules are key to helping them through this unprecedented phase in their lives. By having a structured and predictable day they will feel more secure and reassured. Further information about supporting children with routines is available [here](#).

Check out these websites

- [HSE](#)
- [Department of Education and Skills](#)
- [Department of Health](#)
- [National Parents Council Primary & Early Years](#)
- [National Parents Council - Post Primary](#)

An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Siceolaíochta Oideachais
National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)