

Children of different ages have different needs related to information about COVID-19 and how to prevent and ease stress. Below, learn more about how to handle the current COVID-19 situation with your 3-5 year old.

Explaining COVID-19

- It's okay to talk about COVID-19 with your child. They have likely heard about the virus from you, and/or noticed the recent changes. It is important that caregivers give honest, but comforting, information to their children.
- COVID-19 is an illness that causes symptoms similar to the cold or flu. Most people get better with rest and at-home treatment. Some people can get very sick. Those people need help at the hospital
- The most important thing you can do to stay healthy and help keep other people healthy is to stay home. Right now, everyone who can is staying home. Washing your hands and wearing a mask in public will also help you make sure other people do not get sick.

Signs of Stress

- Young children often absorb more information than they can understand and process. Limit watching the news when your child is in the room.
- If you find your child acting much younger than their age or no longer being able to use recently acquired skills, they might be stressed.
- Increased temper tantrums and difficulty sleeping, as well as bad dreams, are common signs of stress in young children.
- Your child might have more trouble following direction and/or focusing on tasks.
- Young children are likely to show physical signs of stress like stomach aches or headaches.
- This age group may want to be very close to you right now and look for more attention.

Preventing and Easing Stress

- Make sure your child knows that stress is totally normal right now. There's a lot of change and no one can control what's happening. Stress is to be expected.
- Your child may be sad about the impact COVID-19 is having on their life. It isn't self-centered for this age group to be worried about themselves. They might be sad, frustrated, or angry that they can't go to school/daycare or play with friends. Hearing from a caregiver that it's okay to feel that way can help them deal with difficult emotions.
- Your child might require more comfort from you. Giving your child extra hugs and validation can help them to feel more at ease.
- Keeping a schedule is helpful to prevent stress. Children should keep their regular sleep schedule, so they can have a greater sense of stability.
- Children might be worried about friends and family. They are likely to be nervous that people they have not seen are sick. Talk to them in a calm voice with honest but comforting information. Set up virtual visits with loved ones they can't visit.
- Kids this age can engage in deep breathing, guided meditations, or yoga for relaxation. Children can also color or draw for more relaxation.
- Remember, it's important for caregivers to manage their own stress too! You can best support your child when you are feeling healthy.

References

Centers for Disease Control. [Symptoms of coronavirus](#).
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