

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 pre-teen.

Explaining COVID-19

- It's okay to talk about COVID-19 with your child. They have likely heard about the virus through celebrities' social media accounts or news stories. 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, especially young healthy people, get better with rest and minimal treatment. Some people can get very sick. Those people require help at the hospital. Most of the severely ill are older people with existing health conditions.
- The most important thing everyone can do to stay healthy and help keep other people healthy is social distancing. Children could have COVID-19 but not feel sick at all. Right now, everyone who can is social distancing, washing their hands frequently, and wearing a mask in public to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to vulnerable people.

Signs of Stress

- Pre-teens often absorb more information than they can emotionally process. Limit watching the news if your child is in the room.
- Pre-teens straddle the line of sometimes playing like a child or behaving like a teen. If you find your child acting much younger than their age or suddenly seeming more mature, this could be a sign of stress.
- Pre-teens are enjoying a little more freedom now that they are doing virtual education. However, hours of singular focus on any activity, like video games, could be a sign of stress.
- Pre-teens are likely to show physical signs of stress, like stomach aches or headaches.
- This age group may have trouble controlling their emotions and have irritable outbursts.

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 this 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, play sports, have recitals, or visit friends. Hearing from a caregiver that it's okay to feel that way can help ease those difficult emotions.
- Keeping a schedule helps prevent stress. Children should keep their regular sleep schedule so they can do school work during the day.
- Pre-teens might be worried about friends and family. They may be nervous that caregivers and older adults they love may get very sick. Talk to them in a calm voice with honest, comforting information. Set up virtual visits with loved ones they can't visit.
- Kids this age can do deep breathing, guided meditations, or yoga for relaxation. Children can also journal or color for more relaxation.
- Remember, it's important for caregivers to manage their 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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