



INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Talking to children in care about the Coronavirus

The Coronavirus is affecting everybody. We understand that children in care (foster, relative or residential care) are likely to have specific questions and concerns. This tip sheet is to help parents with children in care talk about Coronavirus

It can be hard for adults to make sense of Coronavirus and come to terms with the changes everyone is being asked to make.

Imagine how difficult it must be for our children!

Children are likely to have lots of questions about the Coronavirus and how it might impact them. Children in care will be wondering why their contact visits with you have changed and they might be upset about the changes.

Remember, a child's ability to ask questions and understand answers depends a lot on their age, development and stress levels. Try to think about what you would want to know if you were your child's age and use simple words to answer questions.

To help you reassure your children and stay connected we have made a list of questions most commonly asked by children, along with some suggestions for parents about how to answer.

Question: Why is everyone so worried about the Coronavirus?

Answer: The reason we are all worried about the Coronavirus is that it is very infectious, that means it is very easy for people to catch the illness. We all have to stay at home and stop seeing each other for a while so that we don't pass the virus on to other people. If we stop passing the virus on to other people, there will be less people getting sick from it and that is a very good thing.



Tip! Ask your child "Tell me what you know or have heard about Coronavirus?"

Question: Why can't I see you? I don't understand why things have changed?

Answer: We are not able to see each other at the moment because of the Coronavirus. This is not your fault and you have not done anything wrong. Some things have changed, but one thing that will never change is that I love you.

Even if we can't be in the same room or go to the park together right now, there are other ways we can spend time together. I'm talking with the case worker and we are all finding some new ways to do this, like using video calls.



Tip! Try to keep your tone of voice calm when talking to your child. Kids feel less anxious if they can see and hear that you are okay.

Question: Are you okay? I really worry about you when I can't see you

Answer: Yes, I am okay! I know you are feeling worried and it feels scary that we can't see each other right now. Thank you for telling me how you are feeling. Everybody gets worried and scared sometimes and that's okay. It's good to talk about our feelings.

I am missing you very much and thinking about you all the time. It won't always be this way. Our visits will happen again when it is safe for us to see each other. I am looking forward to being able to give you a big hug and kiss when we are together again.



Tip! Ask your child to tell you about what they have been doing today/this week. Talk about the things you would normally talk about. This will help your child feel things are under control.

Question: How long will things be like this?

Answer: Life won't always be like this. We have lots of really clever doctors and scientists who are finding ways to stop people getting the disease. Nobody really knows how long it will take for things to get back to normal.



Tip! When talking to younger children keep your answers simple and make sure they understand the words you are using. Older children will understand what a vaccine is and you can talk to them about scientists working to develop a vaccine.

Question: Are we all going to die?

Answer: NO! Everybody is NOT going to die.

It's true that some people have died from the Coronavirus but MOST people who get it do not die. Most people who get it feel like they have a cold; they will probably have a cough and maybe a fever. Most people feel a bit sick and then they get better. Some people can have the virus and not even notice! We are all healthy so it is very unlikely we will get too sick.

Older people, and people with other health problems, are more likely to get very sick and can even die from it. That's why we all need to do our bit to protect them by staying home and not spreading the virus.



Tip: Be honest and factual with your kids but try not to scare them with facts and figures. Even young children can pick up when you are not being honest or giving them enough information to understand. Kids tend to 'fill in the gaps' if they don't have enough information to understand something. Their imagination could be scarier than reality! Remember to 'check for understanding'. You can do this by asking your child to tell you what *they think* you have just said!

Question: Are you going to be safe Mum/Dad?

Answer: Yes! I am staying safe and you can too! We know that the virus is spread by coughing and touching surfaces. We can keep ourselves safe by regularly washing our hands with soap and water for 20 seconds (or the length of time it takes to sing the Happy Birthday song twice). Try and remember to do this as often as you can!

Another way we are keeping safe is by staying home as much as possible. I really want to see you and spend time with you, but for the time being we are staying apart to be safe. I LOVE YOU and want you to be safe. I can't wait for things to get back to normal so that we can see each other again. I can't wait to give you a huge hug!



Tip! It's important to try and remain hopeful. Your kids will pick up on how you are feeling about the Coronavirus. One way to lessen your own fears is to ONLY get information about Coronavirus from credible sources. Here are some links to sources you can trust 😊

<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/covid-19-coronavirus>

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>



Feeling unwell?

If you suspect you may have COVID-19 Coronavirus symptoms, or may have had close contact with a person who has COVID-19 it, you should contact the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080

For up-to-date COVID-19 Coronavirus health and information and advice, visit the Department of Health's Healthy WA website or call 13 COVID (132 68 43)



Need Support?

It's normal to be feeling stressed, worried, scared, sad or angry in a crisis. Who would have thought we would all have to deal with a global pandemic?

Fin WA staff are still available by phone for child protection related support and advocacy. Please call 9328 6434 or contact us by email info@finwa.org.au

Our office hours are Monday to Friday from 9am to 4pm. If we don't pick up the phone, please leave a message and we will call you back as soon as we can.



24-hour telephone lines

Lifeline 13 11 14

Beyond Blue 1300 224 636

Health Direct (general health advice) 1800 022 222

Crisis Care (operated by Child Protection and Family Support) 9223 1111

Kids Helpline (5-25 year olds) 1800 551 800

If your situation is an emergency call 000