

## Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and children

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*What Coronavirus means for families and children*

### Keeping families safe

While children are at relatively low risk of contracting coronavirus, the virus spreads **through sneezing, coughing and hand contact**.

It can also spread through objects that have been in contact with an infected person's mouth, nose, hands or body fluids. If you touch an object that a person with coronavirus has touched, like a doorknob, you may be at risk.

### What to do if a child has symptoms

The symptoms of coronavirus include fever, breathing difficulties such as breathlessness, cough, sore throat and fatigue or tiredness. If a child in your care has symptoms or has been in contact with a person who has coronavirus:

1. Phone the 24 hour, 7 day a week **Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398**.
2. Describe the child's symptoms, plus anything else that makes you think the child might have coronavirus, such as overseas travel or contact with a person who may have coronavirus.
3. Follow the advice you're given, which may include staying at home or taking precautions if you're told to visit your GP, hospital or a screening clinic.

If you're told to visit your GP, **make sure to phone first** and tell the GP clinic about your coronavirus concerns.

### Talking about coronavirus

It's important to talk to children about coronavirus and help them to understand and cope with the situation.

- **Find time to talk.** For example, after they get home from school, especially if there has been a discussion of it at school.
- **Find out what the child already knows.** You could ask, "Coronavirus was in the newspaper today. What were people at school saying about it?"
- **Explain coronavirus simply.** Using facts, explain coronavirus calmly and in a way the child can understand.

For younger children, you may like to say, "That's right, some people are getting sick with a germ. It makes them cough and sneeze. The sick people are being looked after well by doctors and hospitals."

For older children, you could use the following explanation, "The virus spreads through things like sneezing, coughing and touching infected surfaces. That's why good hygiene and hand-washing are really important right now."

- **Understand and acknowledge the child's feelings.** While some children might not be worried about coronavirus, others may be scared or anxious. Ask the child how they're feeling and listen to what they say. You can also ask what they need to feel better.

### More information

- This fact sheet has been adapted using information from the [Raising Children](#) website.
- [Australian Government Department of Health – Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) health alert](#)
- [Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services – Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)
- Call the Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398