

is appropriate and can result in taking actions that reduce the risk of illness. Helping children cope with anxiety requires providing accurate prevention information and facts without causing undue alarm.

It is very important to remember that children look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events. If parents seem overly worried, children's anxiety may rise. Parents should reassure children that health and school officials are working hard to ensure that people throughout the country stay healthy. However, children also need factual, age appropriate information about the potential seriousness of disease risk and concrete instruction about how to avoid infections and spread of disease. Teaching children positive preventive measures, talking with them about their fears, and giving them a sense of some control over their risk of infection can help reduce anxiety.

## Specific Guidelines

Remain calm and reassuring.

- x Children will react to and follow your verbal and nonverbal reactions.
- x What you say and do about COVID-19, current prevention efforts, and related events can either increase or decrease your children's anxiety.
- x If true, emphasize to your children that they and your family are fine.
- x Remind them that you and the adults at their school are there to keep them safe and healthy.

Avoid excessive blaming.

- x When tensions are high, sometimes we try to blame someone.
- x It is important to avoid stereotyping any one group of people as responsible for the virus.
- x Bullying or negative comments made toward others should be stopped and reported to the school.
- x Be aware of any comments that other adults are having around your family. You may have to explain what comments mean if they are different than the values that you have at home.

Monitor television viewing and social media use

- x Limit television viewing or access to information on the Internet and

- Practice giving fist or elbow bumps instead of handshakes. Fewer germs are spread this way.
- x Giving children guidance on what they can do to prevent infection gives them a greater sense of control over disease spread and will help to reduce their anxiety.
- x Encourage your child to eat a balanced diet, get enough sleep, and exercise regularly; this will help them develop a strong immune system to fight off illness.

Discuss new rules or practices at school.

- x Many schools already enforce illness prevention habits, including frequent hand washing or use of alcohol-based hand cleansers.
- x Your school nurse or principal will send information home about any new rules or practices.
- x Be sure to discuss this with your child.
- x Contact your school nurse with any specific questions.

Communicate with your school.

- x Let your school know if your child is sick and keep them home. Your school may ask if your child

community leaders to prevent germs from spreading.

- x Upper middle school and high school students are able to discuss the issue in a more in-depth (adult-like) fashion and can be referred directly to appropriate sources of COVID-19 facts. Provide honest, accurate, and factual information about the current status of COVID-19. Having such knowledge can help them feel a sense of control.

#### Suggested Points to Emphasize When Talking to Children

- x Adults at home and school are taking care of your health and safety. If you have concerns, please talk to an adult you trust.
- x Not everyone will get the coronavirus (COVID-19) disease. School and health officials are being especially careful to make sure as few people as possible get sick.
- x It is important that all students treat each other