



How to talk through worries about COVID-19 with students

Some students may feel worried, anxious, or sad about what they've heard about COVID-19 through media or overhearing other people talk about it. Having an open and supportive conversation with students can help reduce any worries they may have.

Some key tips for talking with students about COVID-19 are:

- 1. Answer questions honestly, and keep your answers age-appropriate.** Consider using language or examples that are age-appropriate, monitoring how students are reacting throughout the conversation, and being mindful of the types of information that might cause distress (e.g. talking about deaths).
- 2. Provide reassurance.** Remind students that they are less likely to be sick with the virus, and if they do have the virus they will probably experience symptoms similar to a cold or having the flu. Let students know there are many working to keep them safe: doctors, researchers, government, teachers and cleaners.
- 3. Provide them with opportunity to take action.** Talk to students about the things they can do to look after their family and friends, like washing their hands, sneezing/coughing into their elbow, or calling friends or family who are staying at home during this time (e.g. grandparents).
- 4. Provide a safe space.** Share positive stories about this time – about the ways people have helped each other, and what students are grateful for from this time (e.g. more time with family).
- 5. Be mindful of a student's abilities.** Some students may need one-on-one conversations about COVID-19 to check understanding. For example, some students with autism or intellectual disability may need short, concrete answers, and additional reassurance.
- 6. Ask open questions.** Students may be worried about issues connected to COVID-19, such as changes to their family income/employment, worries about the economy or global issues, or fears about their future education or employment. Ask open questions, listen, and acknowledge and validate their concerns.
- 7. Watch for changes in behaviour.** If changes in energy level, concentration, or behaviour occur in students, consider whether additional supports, such as the student wellbeing team, might be helpful.
- 8. Check-in with parents.** Let parents know what was shared, so they can follow up with their child and monitor them at home.