

Covid19: Mental Health Advice for Parents

Supporting your child if they're feeling worried

It's normal for children and young people to feel worried or anxious at the moment. We've all experienced sudden changes in our lives and routines – and we're living with lots of uncertainty about the coming weeks. For some young people, the coronavirus pandemic may also worsen or trigger anxieties they were already struggling with.

Here are five things you can do to support your child:

1. Talk to them about what's going on. Find out how they're feeling and what they're thinking about, let them know it's okay to feel scared or unsure, and try to answer their questions and reassure them in an age appropriate manner. Remember, you do not need to know all the answers, but talking things through can help them feel calmer.
2. Help them to reflect on how they're feeling and encourage them to think about the things they can do to make them feel safer and less worried.
3. Reassure them that this will pass, you're there for them, and you will get through this together.
4. Spend time doing a positive activity with your child (such as reading, playing, painting or cooking) to help reassure them and reduce their anxiety. This is also a great way of providing a space for them to talk through their concerns, without having a 'big chat'.
5. Keep as many regular routines as possible, so that your child feels safe and that things are stable.

How can I access mental health support and treatment for my child during the coronavirus pandemic?

- If your child is already being treated by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) or another mental health service, get in touch by phone with the service and/or their key workers to discuss how their support will continue during the pandemic. Many services will be offering online or telephone support in place of meeting face-to-face, so this is something you can ask about.
- If your child is already seeing a therapist or counsellor, or needs emotional support and would benefit from starting therapy or counselling while the pandemic is happening, it may be possible to arrange online or phone sessions in place of face-to-face. Ask the professional supporting your child about this, as well as any other ideas they have for how they can make sure some contact continues, rather than cutting off support abruptly.
- Your child can still access emotional support from helplines, textlines and online chat services anytime they need to – and Childline, Samaritans and the YoungMinds Crisis Messenger all provide 24/7 support. The Mix is also providing online and phone support as normal.
- If you are worried about your child's mental health and need professional support, contact your GP. In line with NHS advice, avoid going to the GP surgery in person if you can. To speak to a doctor or book an appointment, you can phone the surgery, use their online contact service if they have one, or visit the surgery's website to find out the best way to get in touch.

If your child experiences a mental health crisis and they need urgent care, you can seek professional support in the following ways:

- If a health professional has already given you a crisis number to call in this situation, call this number.
- If your child is already under the care of CAMHS or another mental health team and they have a crisis plan that states who to contact when they need urgent care, follow this plan.
- If your child needs urgent care but it is not life threatening, you can call 111 for advice.
- If there is a medical emergency, for example if your child is injured or you are worried that they or someone else is at immediate risk of harm, call 999.

If you're unsure about anything and need some advice, you can call **YOUNG MINDS** Parents Helpline for free. We're open Monday-Friday from 9.30am-4pm and you can reach us on 0808 802 5544. If you need further help after speaking to one of their Helpline advisors, they can refer you to one of their specialists – whether it's a psychotherapist, psychiatrist, psychologist or mental health nurse. They will arrange a phone consultation within 7 days of your call.

What do I do if my child won't stay home?

Advice for parents whose children are refusing to comply with the COVID-19 lockdown rules:

1. It's important for parents/carers to have clear and strong messages with their children about why it's important to abide by the rules. For example, remind your child that this is for their safety, for yours and the people around them.
2. Remind them it is not a punishment, it's temporary and things will go back to normal.
3. Think about whether a compromise is possible, e.g. increased time spending talking on the phone or through video messaging with their friends or making sure they have space in the home to have private calls or be on their own.
4. Talk to them about what might help at this time, reassure them that you understand how difficult this is, that it won't last forever and perhaps come up with a few things that might help your child stay in the home.
5. When they do go out for their one bit of exercise a day, ensure you set some expectations for them e.g. they should remain in public spaces (e.g. a local park) and not go into other people's homes or meet up with anyone else. Remind them that being with people who they do not live with is breaking the law and a police officer will separate them and may fine them or you.

Helplines and services available

YoungMinds Parents Helpline

- Parents Helpline is available to offer advice to parents and carers worried about a child or young person under 25.
- Trained advisers are here to give you help and advice, whatever the question.
- Call for free on 0808 802 5544 from Mon-Fri, 9:30am - 4pm.

Anxiety UK

- Practical advice and information for anybody affected by anxiety, stress and/or anxiety based depression – as well as for their parents, family and friends.
- In response to Coronavirus, they are extending their Infoline hours to support as many people as possible.
- Now open Monday-Friday 9.30am-5pm, and Saturdays and Sundays from 10am-8pm.
- Phone: 0344 477 5774
- Email: support@anxietyuk.org.uk
- Text: 07537 416 905
- Live Chat available during office hours via the website
- You can join #Coronanxiety webinars and support groups, including around topics such as OCD, uncertainty and claustrophobia, at www.anxietyuk.org.uk/coronanxiety-support-resources.

The Mix

- You can find information for young people about coronavirus and ideas for things to do while staying home on their website.
- The Mix's emotional support services are open as normal – and if you're under 25 you can talk to them about anything that's troubling you over the phone, email or webchat. You can also use their phone or online counselling service.
- Helpline open daily 4-11pm: 0808 808 4994