

COVID-19: ADVICE FOR CAREGIVERS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

Common Ways Children React to Stress and Ideas to Help



AWARENESS IS KEY

While young children may not understand the facts of the outbreak, they may be sensitive to changes in their routine and the stress experienced by caregivers. Most often, they cannot talk about their fears and distress.

COMMON REACTIONS

- Frequent crying
- Difficulty staying still
- Problems falling asleep and staying asleep
- Nightmares
- Clinging to caregivers
- Fears of being alone
- Tantrums or aggression



MORE REACTIONS

Repetitive play (repeating over and over again what they've heard; taking extra care of stuffed animals and dolls and trying to hide or cover them)

Acting like a younger child ("baby talk", lose their toilet training, wanting a bottle instead of drinking from a cup)

WAYS TO HELP

1. Keeping a regular routine (like regular mealtimes and bedtimes) can help children feel safe. Find time to play and relax, too.
2. Offer verbal and physical reassurance, extra comfort, and patience.
3. Connect with family, friends, and peers virtually.
4. Take care of yourself so that you can remain available to your child and model good behavior for them.



BY JOY D. OSOFSKY, PH.D. & HOWARD OSOFSKY, M.D., PH.D.