

TALKING TO CHILDREN

About Influenza

Children can have difficulty understanding new things – like H1N1 and pandemic influenza. They may have many questions about why things are happening and how they can be fixed. They may worry and have behavior changes. If children see the adults in their life coping well with stress, they will handle it well, too. Adults are encouraged to be calm and confident when dealing with children, in order to help ease their worries and help them feel safe and secure.

There are other ways to help children cope with stressful times as well.

- Try to continue familiar activities, even if their routine must change.
- Ask children what they have heard about influenza and answer their questions honestly with age-appropriate information.
- Allow children to express feelings and concerns. Help them identify these feelings and tell them it is okay to feel that way.
- Use their questions as an opportunity to tell them how they can protect themselves against influenza.
- Help children feel safe and loved by providing appropriate extra attention and affection.
- Limit their exposure to media and adult conversations.

Adults can also empower children by telling them what they can do to protect themselves against influenza.

- Remind them to wash their hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. They can sing “Happy Birthday” through twice.
- Remind them to use a paper towel to dry their hands, turn of the faucet and open the door.
- Remind them to keep a distance of at least six feet from people who are sick.
- Encourage them to make healthy lifestyle choices like getting plenty of sleep, staying physically active and choosing healthy foods and drinks.

Children can also be encouraged to help protect their community.

- Let them know it is important for them to stay home when they are sick.
- Encourage them to stay in one room of their house and limit their interaction with family members, if possible.
- Remind them to cough or sneeze into a tissue or the crook of their arm.
- Remind them to throw away tissues and wash their hands after sneezing or coughing.
- Give them extra love and affection if you are their caregiver.

One of the best ways adults can help children is to be a good example by doing the things you are encouraging them to do.