

## CHILDREN AND MENTAL HEALTH (COVID-19)

This may be a difficult time for children and young people. Some children may react right away, while others may react much later. Negative reactions may include worrying thoughts about their own and their family's health, fear, avoidance, problems sleeping, or physical symptoms such as stomach ache.

**Here are a few tips on how you can support a child or a young person:**

**You should listen to them and acknowledge the signs;** they may be emotional, become upset, anxious, angry or agitated. You may notice a change in their behavior; they become more clingy or withdrawn, they may wet the bed, they may experience stomach aches.

You can't always provide answers to all the questions children and young people ask so focus on listening to them. Children and young people may feel less anxious if they are able to express and communicate their feelings safely.

**Provide clear information about the situation:** All children and young people want to feel that their parents can keep them safe. The best way to achieve this is by talking openly about what is happening and providing honest answers to any questions they have.

They may feel upset, angry or frustrated that they cannot see their family like their grandparents and cousins during this isolation period. Explain to them that this is to keep them and their family safe from the virus and encourage them to use other ways to communicate such as Facetime & WhatsApp.

Use words and explanations that they can understand and **make sure you use reliable sources of information such as the GOV.UK or NHS website.** There is a lot of misleading information from other sources that will create stress for you and your family.

**Be aware of your own reactions:** Remember that children and young people often take their emotional cues from the important adults in their lives, so how you respond to the situation is very important.

**Create a new routine:** Routine gives children and young people an increased feeling of safety in the context of uncertainty, so think about how to develop a new routine (learning, playing, relaxing, exercise and sleep).

**Limit exposure to media and talk about what they have seen and heard.**

If you are worried about your or your child/ or young person's symptoms, please visit the [NHS self-isolation advice website](https://www.nhs.uk/self-isolation-advice/) for information. If you are still worried, call NHS 111.