



CATHOLIC EDUCATION
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Pastoral care and wellbeing – COVID-19

We are all aware of the extensive media coverage of the COVID-19 virus.

The frequency and extent of the coverage means we need to be mindful that there are likely to be students who may have increased feelings of vulnerability or anxiety regarding risk to themselves, their families and friends getting ill with COVID-19. Staff and parents may also share these feelings.

It is important to acknowledge the potential for anxious reactions and therefore, ensure that appropriate supports are provided to these students, teachers and the wider school community.

We are aware that vicarious exposure via the media is also very likely. Even if few are directly impacted, virtually everybody will be following the coverage of the impact of COVID-19. It is important as such to also acknowledge this secondary exposure can also cause distress and fears for safety.

As a Catholic community we continue to extend our prayers for all those impacted.

Speaking with students about COVID-19.

It is important to ensure we provide factual information without fuelling further anxiety. Here are some points to keep in mind when responding to children and young people.

Help children and young people to think critically about the information they are hearing and seeing and reassure.

Build news and media literacy to separate fact from fiction.

Put in perspective and provide reassurance – it is unlikely that they will get sick and if they do they will go to the Doctor. Most children have mild symptoms and are well again. Doctors are working on finding a solution.

Remain calm.

Remember that children and young people pick on both your verbal and non-verbal cues. They take on board how you are reacting to the situation. As adults manage your own fears and anxiety to give children a sense of safety

Make yourself available to listen and answer questions.

It is often most helpful when asked a question about the virus and what may happen to start with finding out what the child or young person already knows. Listen to their concerns and acknowledge the feelings they are expressing.

Be developmentally appropriate.

Don't volunteer too much information, as this may be overwhelming. Instead, try to answer the child or young person's questions. Do your best to answer honestly and clearly. It's okay if you can't answer everything; being available is what matters.

Empower children and young people with what they can do.

Hygiene strategies such as increasing hand washing, using sanitiser if soap and water aren't available, catching their coughs by covering their mouth, etc.

Avoid language that might blame others and lead to stigma.

Remember that viruses can make anyone sick, regardless of a person's race or ethnicity. Avoid making assumptions about who might have COVID-19.

If further assistance is needed, contact the Childsafe Team on 6380 5134.
For staff, remind them about the Employee Assistance Program.

Resources for Parents (and Teachers)

How to talk to your kids about coronavirus

<https://www.nbcnews.com/better/lifestyle/how-talk-your-kids-about-coronavirus-ease-their-fears-ncna1129851>

This is a comic for children explaining the coronavirus

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus>

A 4 minute animated clip for children on coronavirus

<https://www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus/>