

## **Our Brooklin Kids: Talking to Kids About Coronavirus**

**By Leanne Brown**

The news about the coronavirus (COVID-19) is everywhere. So is hand sanitizer. It's no surprise then that all this information is causing a lot of worry. When it comes to talking to your kids about the coronavirus, a healthy dose of facts is the best way to alleviate anxiety and instill good hygiene practices.

### **Checking anxiety**

With all the media coverage, it's understandable for kids to be worried about themselves and their parents. Kids are going to watch their parents' reactions and mirror their concerns. Parents need to fact-check and not let their fears take charge.

### **Talk now**

As parents, we want to protect our kids from bad news. Kids can sense when there's something wrong. It's best to be open and talk about the virus in the context of their world. Ask your child to tell you what they know about the coronavirus. The information they share can help you determine which facts you need to clarify first.

### **Be empathetic**

Listen to their concerns and don't dismiss their feelings. Ask what they are worried about so you can better understand what they're feeling. Your child's worries can be based on false information. Talking about it allows you to know what they're thinking and to address their concerns with facts.

### **Clarify facts**

The information you share with your children should come from one or two sources, not from rumours on the internet. The U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) are the best places to get your facts.

### **Age appropriate**

For wee ones, it's best to talk about good hygiene, hand washing and how to cough and sneeze like a vampire, ie. into your elbow. A fun way to extend the time they spend washing their hands is to sing "Happy Birthday" twice. With elementary and high school kids, the best approach is to discuss the facts, practice good hygiene and stay home.

### **Watch for changes**

Watch for trouble sleeping, headaches, stomach aches, or behaviour problems. These can be indicators of how your child is feeling and may mean they need better support.

### **Keep routines**

Keeping routines helps reduce stress. If changes need to be made, make them with a positive attitude. If they see you coping easily, they will, too.

The best ways to keep our families healthy: Hand washing; not touching the eyes, nose, and mouth; keeping the immune system strong by eating well; getting enough sleep; and keeping stress levels down.