

How to Talk to Your Children About Ebola

In the midst of the international Ebola outbreak, parents, teachers and other caregivers here in the U.S. are very concerned about how news about the deadly virus will affect the emotional well-being of their children. With continuous media coverage and spread of inaccurate information, Save the Children's emergency health experts have created tips for caregivers on how to educate children about Ebola and help them cope. These tips are based on Save the Children's 100 years of international experience in protecting children in crisis.

Be Honest With Children

The unknown is perhaps the scariest thing of all for young children. Give children information that is clear, accurate and age appropriate. For example, Ebola is a rare disease and it's not easy to catch—and you can't catch it from the air or just by being near someone who is sick. Listen to your children carefully. Find out what your child knows and understands about Ebola before responding to questions. This will help alleviate their distress and clear up confusion. For more details, visit www.savethechildren.org/ebola-info.

Give Children Reassurance

Ebola can be a frightening disease – especially the symptoms, high death rate and protective gear that looks like space suits. Children can experience stress when they do not understand what they perceive to be a dangerous situation. But the truth is, Ebola is not a sizeable threat to the American population and the isolated cases that have been reported have been largely contained. Reassure your children that there are many very smart, good people all over the world who are working to help take care of people with the disease and find a treatment – as well as working hard to keep them safe.

Look for the Helpers

Take a lesson from Mr. Rodgers: "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping." Use this as a lesson in compassion and teach your kids the importance in helping others who may be facing a crisis.

Limit Media

While it can be important for adults to stay informed about the Ebola outbreak, media images and reports may be confusing and frightening for children. So, cut back on the news when your little ones are around. Instead, encourage your children to ask questions and have an educational discussion about the outbreak.

Keep Families Healthy

Teach children that it is very unlikely for a child in the US to catch Ebola. Very, very few people in the US have any chance of catching it because you can only get it from touching a sick person's body fluids (spit, sweat, vomit, blood, urine). And to spread the virus, the person with it has to actually start to feel sick (have a fever, aches, or diarrhea). The flu season is actually a more pressing .In fact, up to 20 percent of the U.S. population may catch the flu this season, whereas there have only been a handful of reported cases of Ebola.

Now is a good time reinforce healthy hygiene habits:

- Teach your children about good hand-washing techniques.
- Teach them not to share germs with their classmates and friends.
- Talk about how important it is to cover your cough and dispose of tissues right away.
- Remind them that being healthy means getting plenty of sleep, eating nutritious food, drinking lots of water, and being physically active.

Reinforce that healthy bodies have strong immune systems that do a better job fighting off infections off all kinds. These are good basic health practices that will help prevent colds, the flu and other diseases that can be spread like Ebola

If you or your kids are interested in learning more, here are some great resources:

[CDC Infographics and Factsheets](#)

[Map of cases and World map](#)

[Washington Post Ebola report \(for parents\)](#)

[Infographic of how contagious Ebola really is](#)

[Kid's Health Article on Ebola \(for middle school age\)](#)