



Iowa Department of Public Health

ADVICE FOR TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT INFLUENZA

Stressful situations often cause children to worry and have many questions about why it is happening and how it can be fixed. If you cope with a stressful situation well, your children will also cope better. Your confidence and calm attitude will help your children ease their worries and feel safe and secure.

Helpful Tips Regarding Children and Influenza:

- Keep activities as consistent and normal as possible even if your normal routine changes because of influenza. Ask your children what they have heard about influenza. Answer questions openly and honestly, at a level they can understand. Be clear and do not avoid difficult questions.
- Allow your children to express their feelings and concerns about getting influenza or things like people sneezing around them. Let them know it is okay to be afraid or mad. Ask questions so you can help them identify and cope with their feelings.
- Children always need to feel safe and protected. When they are uncertain about getting sick and afraid they may need even more affection and attention.
- Limit exposure to media and adult conversations about influenza. If your children are watching television, try to watch with them or make sure you are available to answer questions about what they have heard.
- Encourage healthy behaviors: eating well, sleeping well, and playing outside.
- Use their questions as an opportunity to let them know what they can do to avoid getting influenza.
- Focus on what your child CAN DO to avoid getting influenza.

Giving children guidance on what they can do to prevent infection gives them a greater sense of control over the flu and will help to reduce their anxiety.

Suggested Points to Emphasize When Talking to Children

- At this time few people are sick with the flu virus in this country. School officials are being especially careful this year to make sure as few of students and staff as possible are exposed to influenza.
- There are things we can do to stay healthy and avoid spreading disease, such as:
 - washing our hands
 - covering our mouths with a tissue when we sneeze or cough
 - not sharing food or drinks
 - staying home when we don't feel well
- It is important that all students treat each other with respect and do not gossip about who may or may not have the influenza.

For additional information see:

www.nasponline.org/resources/Talking_With_Children_About_Flu_FINAL.pdf

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