How to Talk with your Children about Ebola

With so much about Ebola in the news, chances are your children have heard about it. You can help your children understand what is happening here in the United States and in West Africa by talking with them directly. Not talking about Ebola can make it seem even scarier to a child. You tailor these ideas to fit your child’s age, development, and concerns.

Ask your children: What have you heard about Ebola?

- Use simple language to answer their concerns and new information your children might have seen, for example, children ask if it is possible for them to catch Ebola and whether or not you have heard of any people who have caught Ebola from someone else. They also may have been told that you are scared or worried about it. If someone in your family seems to be scared or worried about Ebola, the person will black out the ability to think or speak about it.
- Don’t make a one-time conversation. Continue to talk with your children about any questions they may have. They may ask the same question over and over again. Children see a lot of information on the internet, television, and social media. So in the United States, very few people of all ages have been diagnosed with Ebola.
- Give your children practical advice to help them stay healthy. For example, this is a good time to remind them how important it is for them to wash their hands regularly, maintain good eating habits, and staying physically active.

Gently correct inaccurate information.

- Correct inaccurate information clearly, using words your child can understand. For example, tell your children that as of November 14, 2014, there have been very few people who have caught Ebola in the United States. There have been no reported cases of children with Ebola in the United States.
- Correctly answer your child’s questions about Ebola. For example, children may ask if it is possible for them to catch Ebola at school. You can answer their questions by saying that schoolchildren are not at risk of catching Ebola.
- Correct misinformation your child may have heard. For example, children might ask if someone who died from Ebola spreads the virus. Tell your children that the virus does not spread through the air or through the food or water. The virus does not spread through the air, water, or food.

Allow your children to express their feelings and help them cope.

- If your children are worried or scared, don’t talk too much. Instead, encourage them to talk about how the feeling is making them feel. Allow your children to describe their feelings and concerns. Do this in a way that won’t scare them. For example, you might tell your child that when you heard about Ebola in West Africa, you might have felt sad for the families of people who got sick or died of Ebola.
- Tell your children how you dealt with your feelings and concerns. For example, to help your child feel better, you might tell them that when you heard about Ebola in West Africa, you might have felt sad for the families of people who got sick or died of Ebola.
- Help your children figure out what they might try to comfort themselves. You might tell them that when you heard about Ebola in West Africa, you might have felt sad for the families of people who got sick or died of Ebola.

How to answer your children’s questions about Ebola

Here are some questions children may ask and some possible answers.

Can I catch Ebola?

- Ebola doesn’t spread easily. It is difficult for the virus to spread from one person to another. Avoid close contact with someone who is sick and has the Ebola virus. Simple things like touching or shaking hands don’t spread Ebola. For example, this is a good time to remind them how important it is for them to wash their hands before eating, after touching someone who is sick, or after playing soccer. The virus doesn’t spread through the air, water, or food.
- Correct inaccurate information clearly, using words your child can understand. For example, tell your children that as of November 14, 2014, there have been very few people who have caught Ebola in the United States. There have been no reported cases of children with Ebola in the United States.
- Correctly answer your child’s questions about Ebola. For example, children may ask if it is possible for them to catch Ebola at school. You can answer their questions by saying that schoolchildren are not at risk of catching Ebola.
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How do I know if I have Ebola?

- The sooner you catch Ebola, the more likely you are to get sick. The symptoms of Ebola are not very helpful in deciding if you have the virus.
- If you need to be treated at a hospital, your doctor will ask questions about your recent travel.
- If you are in an environment where you are getting sick, please get help.

What can I do so I don’t catch Ebola?

Even though children can catch Ebola, there are things they can do to keep healthy. Make sure they wash their hands before eating, before touching someone who is sick, before playing soccer, and before touching someone who is sick.

If children ask you questions about what they can do to stay healthy, you can help them understand what is happening here in the United States and in West Africa by talking with them directly. Not talking about Ebola can make it seem even scarier to a child. You tailor these ideas to fit your child’s age, development, and concerns.