
How Do I Talk to My Child about Ebola?

In order to reduce your child's fears of Ebola, it is best to limit his or her exposure to TV reports on the disease. You may also need to monitor your child's use of social media and the internet. Be cautious about discussing Ebola where children may overhear. If your children ask questions, make time to listen to their concerns and answer their questions:

- Be honest. Answer questions based on the **facts**.
- Speak in a calm tone of voice. Use reassuring words.
- Let them know that parents, teachers, doctors and other adults in your child's life are working together to keep children healthy.
- Use explanations that are age-appropriate.
- If children have seen pictures or video from West Africa, explain that the situation in the United States is very different and what they may have seen on TV is not happening near them.
- Remind children to wash their hands. Good hand washing is not only beneficial for your children's health, it can also help your children feel able to make a difference.
- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has additional help on *Talking with Children: Tips for Caregivers, Parents and Teachers during Infectious Disease Outbreaks* online at <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Talking-With-Children-Tips-for-Caregivers-Parents-and-Teachers-During-Infectious-Disease-Outbreaks/All-New-Products/SMA14-4886>.

Help Reduce Social Stigma and Prevent Bullying

Stigma can occur when people link a disease with a certain group of people, even though not everyone in that group is at risk for the disease. Children and families are not a threat simply because they have connections to West Africa.

You may have seen on the news that health officials are monitoring people who may be at risk for Ebola because they have **recently traveled** in West Africa or had contact with an Ebola patient. In some cases, people may be asked to limit their travel or other daily activities. In other cases, people may be able to go about daily activities while monitoring for early symptoms, such as fever. If someone does not develop symptoms of Ebola during this 21-day period, that person does not have Ebola and poses no risk to others.

All children should be encouraged to show consideration and respect for classmates and friends with family ties to West Africa, who may be experiencing teasing or bullying as a result of Ebola stigma.

Remind your children that Ebola is caused by a virus, not a person or a group, and that the virus is difficult to spread.

Who Can I Talk to if I am Worried?

As a parent or guardian, you too may feel stress or worry about Ebola, especially if there are cases near where you live. You can call the Disaster Distress Helpline (1-800-985-5990) to talk to someone immediately, confidentially, and for free. The helpline can also be accessed at <http://disasterdistress.samhsa.gov/> and TTY for Deaf individuals: 1-800-846-8517. *Tips on Coping with Stress during Infectious Disease Outbreaks* are also available online at <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Coping-with-Stress-During-Infectious-Disease-Outbreaks/SMA14-4885>.

Where Can I Learn More?

- For more information on Ebola, contact your state or local public health agency or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html>.