

# Explaining COVID-19 to Primary School-aged Children

(5 – 8 years)

## What is the Coronavirus?

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a type of illness, which makes people sick with a cough and a fever.

## How do people get Coronavirus?

Coronavirus has to get inside a person's body to make them sick. This can happen in a few different ways:

- **when people touch each other (like hugging, kissing or holding hands);**
- **when people cough or sneeze without covering their mouth, or;**
- **when a person touches their eyes, ears, nose or mouth with unclean hands.**

## What will happen to me if I get the virus?

If you become sick with coronavirus, you might have a cough, a sore throat or a fever.

But you might not feel sick at all, coronavirus doesn't seem to make children very sick. If you think you are feeling sick, you should tell an adult right away.

If your parents think you might have coronavirus, they will bring you to a doctor to be tested for it. The doctor or nurse will use a long cotton bud to brush the inside of your nose and the back of your mouth. You might not like the way this feels and that's okay. It is the only way they can test for coronavirus and it will be over quickly.



It is important that you let the doctors and nurses do their job to look after you.

If the doctor or nurse says that you have the virus, then you will need to stay at home for a while and not share your things with anyone else. You might also have to stay in your bedroom for longer than usual. This is called **'self-isolation,'** you might have heard about this on the news. The reason we **'self-isolate'** is to make sure that we don't give coronavirus to other people. Even if it doesn't make you feel sick at all, it could make another person very very ill.

You can use AsIAM's social story to see what you can do if you have to stay at home here: <https://asiam.ie/social-story-covid-19-lockdown/>

## How do I look after myself?

There are lots of things you can do to make sure you don't get sick with coronavirus. The most important thing to do is to wash your hands many times during the day. You should always wash your hands **when you use the bathroom, before and after you eat, after you have been outside and after you sneeze or cough.**

You can stop coronavirus from spreading by:

- **Coughing and sneezing into your elbow, not your hands;**
- **Putting tissues in the bin straightaway after you use them;**
- **Not standing too close to anyone you do not live with (this is what adults call "social distancing"), and;**
- **Staying at home and not going to places where there are lots of people, like shops, cinemas or parks.**

You might not be allowed to see older family members for a while, like grandparents. This is because older people can get very very sick if they get coronavirus so we have to protect them and keep them safe.



You can still keep in touch by video-calling, text messaging or playing online games together. Staying away from people we love will be hard but it is the best thing we can do for them and we will be so happy when we can see them again!

## **What can I do if I feel frightened about Coronavirus?**

It is okay to feel frightened by coronavirus. This is a new illness and doctors and nurses are just figuring out how to help people who have it.

Every time a new illness is discovered, scientists work really hard to create a medicine to help the person feel better and they are working really hard to do this now for people who have coronavirus.

If you are feeling upset or worried or frightened about coronavirus, talk to a trusted adult about how you feel.

They will be able to calm your worries and make you feel better.

Here are some ways you can help yourself feel calm if you are feeling worried:

- **Counting slowly to 10 or 20;**
- **Taking five deep breaths;**
- **Do ten jumping jacks;**
- **Doing an activity you enjoy - like drawing, reading, playing a game, watching a TV show or movie or making a jigsaw;**
- **Looking at a collection of favourite or special items;**
- **Looking at special photos of people you love;**
- **Do your favourite exercise;**
- **Give yourself a big hug;**
- **Hug your favourite soft toy, or;**
- **Play with a pet.**



# Explaining COVID-19 to Primary School-aged Children

**(8-12 years)**

## What is COVID-19?

Covid-19 (or Coronavirus) is a virus that makes people sick with a cough and a temperature. You might remember a time when there was a tummy bug or the chicken pox in your school, and lots of children in your class got it and were absent for a while. That was because all of those children were together in one classroom so the bug spread quickly. This is why we are not in school now, to stop the virus from spreading.

## How does COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 spreads in 3 ways:

- 1. when people touch each other, like holding hands, high five-ing, hugging and kissing;**
- 2. when a person sneezes or coughs near another person, or;**
- 3. when we share items. If a person who has the virus uses a tea cup and shares that tea cup with another person, that person could get the virus too.**

## What happens if I get the virus?

If you catch the virus you might have a cough and a temperature. Or you might not feel unwell at all. So far what we know is that the virus doesn't seem to harm children. Some children have the virus and don't even know they have it! This is a good thing because it means you won't feel sick, but you still have to be careful because even if you don't feel sick you can still spread it to other people and it might harm them.

If your parents think you have the virus, they will bring you to a test centre to be tested for it. A nurse will use a long cotton bud to brush the inside of your nose and



the back of your throat and mouth. They will send the cotton bud to a lab to be tested and this will tell them if you have the virus or not.

If the test comes back positive, that means you have the virus. You will have to **'self-isolate.'** This means you will have to stay in your bedroom as much as possible and not share anything with other people in your house. You can still go outside for some fresh air but you shouldn't play with other children for 2 weeks. Even if the virus is not making you feel sick, it is important that you self-isolate to protect other people from catching the virus.

## How do I look after myself and others?

The good news is there are lots of steps we can take to look after ourselves and the people we care about, by stopping the virus from spreading. You can stop the virus from spreading by washing your hands for 20 seconds with soap and hot water regularly during the day.

You should always wash your hands at these times:

- **after you use the toilet;**
- **before and after you eat;**
- **when you enter a new place (like a shop or a house);**
- **after you cough or sneeze;**
- **after you use a tissue, or;**
- **after you have touched an item that is shared with other people.**

You can stop the virus from spreading by:

- **coughing/sneezing into your elbow, not your hands;**
- **putting tissues in the bin immediately after you use them;**
- **not standing too close to anyone you do not live with (this is called 'social distancing');**
- **helping to keep the house clean so that the virus cannot live in your house, because it does not like clean surfaces.**
- **not seeing older family members, like grandparents, for a while. The virus can be very dangerous for older people so we have to try really hard not to pass it to them by accident;**



- **not visiting other people's houses or playing with big groups of friends for a while. The virus can spread really easily through big groups of people, we can stop it from doing that by staying in small groups, and;**
- **staying at home and not travelling very far from your house for a while. The virus can spread really easily in places where there are lots of people, like shops, cinemas and playgrounds. We can stop it from spreading if we don't go to these places.**

## How do I look after my mind?

You might see or read things that you don't fully understand on social media or on the news. Or you might hear adults around you talking about things you don't fully understand.

When we don't understand something, that can make it scary. It is really important that if you see or read something online that makes you feel uncomfortable, worried or scared, that you stop looking at that page or website and tell a grown up about it. They will be able to calm your worries.

Not everything that is being talked about in the news and online is suitable for children. So make sure that you are not overloading your brain with information. You can help to keep yourself in a good mood by doing things you enjoy, like playing music, playing board games, baking, playing outside, reading etc.



# Explaining COVID-19 to Primary School-aged Children

## (Short Version)

Some questions your child might have;

### What is Covid-19?

*A virus that makes people sick with a cough and a temperature.*

### How does it spread?

*It spreads when a person who has the virus touches another person, coughs or sneezes near another person or shares an item they have touched with another person.*

### What will happen if I get the virus?

*You might have a cough and a temperature, or you might not feel sick at all. If you have to be tested for the virus, you will visit a testing centre and a nurse will use a long cotton bud to brush the inside of your nose and the back of your throat and mouth. They will send the cotton bud to a lab to be tested and this will tell them if you have the virus or not.*

### What can I do to look after myself and other people?

*We can help to stop the virus from spreading. You can do this by washing your hands often during the day, sneezing/coughing into your elbow, helping to keep the house clean, not visiting older family members for a while and not going to crowded or busy places for a while. You can also stop the virus from spreading by not standing too close to people that you don't live with. This is called **'social distancing.'***

### What should I do if I am worried about the virus?



*If you are worried about the virus, the best thing you can do is talk to a trusted adult. They will be able to calm your worries. If you see something on the news or online that makes you feel scared, worried or uncomfortable, stop looking at it and tell a grown up about it.*

## **What can I do to make myself feel better if I am frightened by COVID-19?**

*It is really important that you look after your mind during this time. Keeping up a daily routine, exercising, eating well and doing things you enjoy will all help you to feel better if you are frightened.*

