

Mental Health for Children and Young Adults

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- Children's Mental Health
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- Youth Mental Health
- Helping Children Cope with Stress During the 2019-nCoV Outbreak

This resource is meant to provide useful, educational materials to daycare providers and parents of young children.



Visit [GetHealthyCT.org](https://www.gethealthyct.org) for more information.



May 2021





CHILDRENS MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS



Promoting children's mental health

Children's Mental Health Matters

Just as you can help prevent a child from catching a cold or breaking a bone, you can help prevent a child from having mental health problems. We know what it takes to keep a child physically healthy—nutritious food, exercise, immunizations - but the basics for good mental health aren't always as clear. The first "basic" is to know that children's mental health matters. We need to treat a child's mental health just like we do their physical health, by giving it thought and attention and, when needed, professional help.

Consequences of Mental Illness May Be Prevented

Although there can be a genetic or biological component to mental illness, and many children live in unsafe environments that put them "at-risk" of developing mental health problems, the consequences of mental illness may often be prevented through early intervention. At the very least, it is possible to delay mental illness and/or lessen symptoms. The best way to promote children's mental health is to build up their strengths, help to "protect" them from risks and give them tools to succeed in life.

Mental Health Promotion

Promoting a child's mental health means helping a child feel secure, relate well with others and foster their growth at home and at school. We do this by helping to build a child's confidence and competence - the foundation of strong self-esteem. This can be achieved by providing a child with a safe and secure home; warmth and love; respect; caring and trusting relationships with family, friends, and adults in the community; opportunities to talk about experiences and feelings; time to play, learn, and succeed; encouragement and praise; and consistent and fair expectations with clear consequences for misbehavior.

For more information, contact Mental Health America at

Promoting children's mental health

Know the signs

If there is concern that a child may be experiencing a mental health problem, it is important for adults to seek help from a doctor or mental health professional. Just like with physical illness, treating mental health problems early may help to prevent a more serious illness from developing in the future. Consider consulting a professional if a child you know:

- ☒ Feels very sad, hopeless or irritable
- ☒ Feels overly anxious or worried
- ☒ Is scared and fearful; has frequent nightmares
- ☒ Is excessively angry
- ☒ Uses alcohol or drugs
- ☒ Avoids people; wants to be alone all of the time
- ☒ Hears voices or sees things that aren't there
- ☒ Can't concentrate, sit still, or focus attention
- ☒ Needs to wash, clean things, or perform certain rituals many times a day
- ☒ Talks about suicide or death
- ☒ Hurts other people or animals; or damages property
- ☒ Has major changes in eating or sleeping habits
- ☒ Loses interest in friends or things usually enjoyed
- ☒ Falls behind in school or earns lower grades

What Parents Can Do

Care for your children's mental health just as you do for their physical health.

Pay attention to warning signs, and if you're concerned there might be a problem seek professional help.

Let your children know that everyone experiences pain, fear, sadness, worry, and anger and that these emotions are a normal part of life, encourage them to talk about their concerns and to express their emotions.

Be a role model—talk about your own feelings, apologize, don't express anger with violence, and use active problem-solving skills.

Encourage your children's talents and skills, while also accepting their limitations.

Celebrate your children's accomplishments.

Give your children opportunities to learn and grow, including being involved in their school and community and with other caring adults and friends.

Think of "discipline" as a form of teaching, rather than as physical punishment; set clear expectations and be consistent and fair with consequences for misbehavior; make sure to acknowledge both positive and negative behaviors.

For more information, contact Mental Health America at

Promoting children's mental health

What Teachers Can Do

Think about mental health as an important component of a child being "ready to learn;" if a child is experiencing mental health problems, he or she will likely have trouble focusing in school.

Know the warning signs of mental illness and take note of these in your students and seek consultation from the school mental health professional when you have concerns; psychological and/or educational testing may be necessary.

Use the mental health professional(s) at your school as resources for: preventive interventions with students, including social skills training; education for teachers and students on mental health, crisis counseling for teachers and students following a traumatic event, and classroom management skills training for teachers.

Allow your students to discuss troubling events at school or in the community; encourage students to verbally describe their emotions.

What Doctors Can Do

Recognize that mental health is part of a child's overall health.

Be informed about mental health issues in children and know the warning signs of mental illness.

Become familiar with mental health screening tools. Use these when a "red flag" is raised or routinely screen for illness, asking both children and parents about a child's emotions and behaviors—especially substance use, depression symptoms, school performance, and talk of suicide.

Be familiar with the most effective pharmacologic and nonpharmacologic treatment options.

Make referrals for mental health care when appropriate and follow-up with parents after a referral is made.

Promoting children's mental health

Help is Available

Mental disorders in children are treatable. Early identification, diagnosis and treatment help children reach their full potential and improve the family dynamic.

Children's mental health matters! To learn more, talk to a doctor, mental health professional or visit one of the websites below.

Mental Health America	800-969-6MHA	www.mentalhealthamerica.net
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry		www.aacap.org
American Psychiatric Association		www.psych.org
American Psychological Association		www.apa.org
Center for Parent Information and Resources		www.parentcenterhub.org
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health		www.ffcmh.org
Kids Mental Health Information Portal		www.kidsmentalhealth.org



Children's Mental Health

New Report

The term *childhood mental disorder* means all mental disorders that can be diagnosed and begin in childhood (for example, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Tourette syndrome, behavior disorders, mood and anxiety disorders, autism spectrum disorders, substance use disorders, etc.). Mental disorders among children are described as serious changes in the ways children typically learn, behave, or handle their emotions. Symptoms usually start in early childhood, although some of the disorders may develop throughout the teenage years. The diagnosis is often made in the school years and sometimes earlier.

However, some children with a mental disorder may not be recognized or diagnosed as having one.

Childhood mental disorders can be treated and managed. There are many evidence-based treatment options, so parents and doctors should work closely with everyone involved in the child's treatment — teachers, coaches, therapists, and other family members. Taking advantage of all the resources available will help parents, health professionals and educators guide the child towards success. Early diagnosis and appropriate services for children and their families can make a difference in the lives of children with mental disorders.

An Important Public Health Issue

Mental health is important to overall health. Mental disorders are chronic health conditions that can continue through the lifespan. Without early diagnosis and treatment, children with mental disorders can have problems at home, in school, and in forming friendships. This can also interfere with their healthy development, and these problems can continue into adulthood.

Children's mental disorders affect many children and families. Boys and girls of all ages, ethnic/racial backgrounds, and regions of the United States experience mental disorders. Based on the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine report (Preventing mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders among young people: progress and possibilities, 2009) that gathered findings from previous studies, it is estimated that 13–20 percent of children living in the United States (up to 1 out of 5 children) experience a mental disorder in a given year and an estimated \$247 billion is spent each year on childhood mental disorders. Because of the impact on children, families, and communities, children's mental disorders are an important public health issue in the United States.

Public health surveillance — which is the collection and monitoring of information about health among the public over time — is a first step to better understand childhood mental disorders and promote children's mental health. Ongoing and systematic monitoring of mental health and mental disorders will help: increase understanding of the mental health needs of children; inform research on factors that increase risk and promote prevention; find out which programs are effective at preventing mental disorders and promoting children's mental health; and monitor if treatment and prevention efforts are effective.

CDC issues first comprehensive report on children's mental health in the United States

A new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), *Mental Health Surveillance Among Children — United States, 2005–2011*, describes federal efforts on monitoring mental disorders, and presents estimates of the number of children with specific mental disorders. The report was developed in collaboration with key federal partners, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), and Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). It is an important step towards better understanding these disorders and the impact they have on children.

This is the first report to describe the number of U.S. children aged 3–17 years who have specific mental disorders, compiling information from different data sources covering the period 2005–2011. It provides information on childhood mental disorders where there is recent or ongoing monitoring. These include ADHD, disruptive behavioral disorders such as oppositional defiant disorder and conduct disorder, autism spectrum disorders, mood and anxiety disorders including depression, substance use disorders, and Tourette syndrome. The report also includes information on a few indicators of mental health, specifically, mentally unhealthy days and suicide.



Who is Affected?

The following are key findings from this report about mental disorders among children aged 3–17 years:

- Millions of American children live with depression, anxiety, ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, Tourette syndrome or a host of other mental health issues.
- ADHD was the most prevalent current diagnosis among children aged 3–17 years.
- The number of children with a mental disorder increased with age, with the exception of autism spectrum disorders, which was highest among 6 to 11 year old children.
- Boys were more likely than girls to have ADHD, behavioral or conduct problems, autism spectrum disorders, anxiety, Tourette syndrome, and cigarette dependence.
- Adolescent boys aged 12–17 years were more likely than girls to die by suicide.
- Adolescent girls were more likely than boys to have depression or an alcohol use disorder.

Data collected from a variety of data sources between the years 2005–2011 show:

Children aged 3–17 years currently had:

- ADHD (6.8%)
- Behavioral or conduct problems (3.5%)
- Anxiety (3.0%)
- Depression (2.1%)
- Autism spectrum disorders (1.1%)
- Tourette syndrome (0.2%) (among children aged 6–17 years)

Adolescents aged 12–17 years had:

- Illicit drug use disorder in the past year (4.7%)
- Alcohol use disorder in the past year (4.2%)
- Cigarette dependence in the past month (2.8%)

The estimates for current diagnosis were lower than estimates for “ever” diagnosis, meaning whether a child had ever received a diagnosis in his or her lifetime. Suicide, which can result from the interaction of mental disorders and other factors, was the second leading cause of death among adolescents aged 12–17 years in 2010.

Looking to the Future

Public health includes mental health. CDC worked with several agencies to summarize and report this information. The goal is now to build on the strengths of these partnering agencies to develop better ways to document how many children have mental disorders, better understand the impacts of mental disorders, inform needs for treatment and intervention strategies, and promote the mental health of children. This report is an important step on the road to recognizing the impact of childhood mental disorders and developing a public health approach to address children’s mental health.

What You Can Do

Parents: You know your child best. Talk to your child’s health care professional if you have concerns about the way your child behaves at home, in school, or with friends.

Youth: It is just as important to take care of your mental health as it is your physical health. If you are angry, worried or sad, don’t be afraid to talk about your feelings and reach out to a trusted friend or adult.

Health care professionals: Early diagnosis and appropriate treatment based on updated guidelines is very important. There are resources available to help diagnose and treat children’s mental disorders.

Teachers/School Administrators: Early identification is important, so that children can get the help they need. Work with families and health care professionals if you have concerns about the mental health of a child in your school.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Mental health surveillance among children — United States 2005–2011.

MMWR 2013;62(Suppl; May 16, 2013):1–35. The report is available at

http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/su6202a1.htm?s_cid=su6202a1_w

Additional Information: www.cdc.gov/childdevelopment

800-CDC-INFO, TTY: 888-232-6348; cdcinfo@cdc.gov

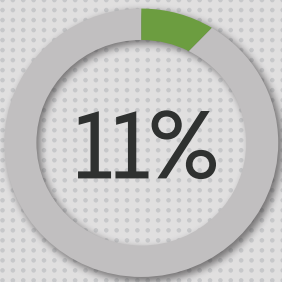
Mental Health Facts

CHILDREN & TEENS

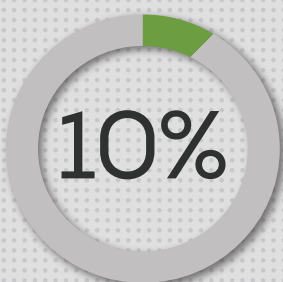
Fact: 1 in 5 children ages 13-18 have, or will have a serious mental illness.¹



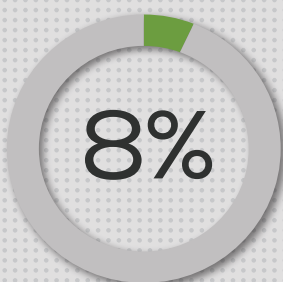
20% of youth ages 13-18 live with a mental health condition¹



11% of youth have a mood disorder¹



10% of youth have a behavior or conduct disorder¹



8% of youth have an anxiety disorder¹

Impact



50%

50% of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14 and 75% by age 24.¹

10 yrs



The average delay between onset of symptoms and intervention is 8-10 years.¹

37%



37% of students with a mental health condition age 14 and older drop out of school—the highest dropout rate of any disability group.¹

70%



70% of youth in state and local juvenile justice systems have a mental illness.¹

Suicide

3rd



Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death in youth ages 10 - 24.¹



90%

90% of those who died by suicide had an underlying mental illness.¹

Warning Signs



Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than 2 weeks (e.g., crying regularly, feeling fatigued, feeling unmotivated).



Trying to harm or kill oneself or making plans to do so.



Out-of-control, risk-taking behaviors that can cause harm to self or others.



Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart, physical discomfort or fast breathing.



Not eating, throwing up or using laxatives to lose weight; significant weight loss or gain.



Severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships.



Repeated use of drugs or alcohol.



Drastic changes in behavior, personality or sleeping habits (e.g., waking up early and acting agitated).



Extreme difficulty in concentrating or staying still that can lead to failure in school.



Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities like hanging out with friends or going to classes.

4 Things Parents Can Do



Talk with your pediatrician



Get a referral to a mental health specialist



Work with the school



Connect with other families

¹ This document cites statistics provided by the National Institute of Mental Health. www.nimh.nih.gov

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AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Stress in America

Mind/Body Health: For a Healthy Mind and Body, Talk to a Psychologist

Identifying Signs of Stress in Your Children and Teens

Young people, like adults, experience stress. It can come from a variety of sources including doing well in school, making and sustaining friendships, or managing perceived expectations from their parents, teachers, or coaches. Some stress can be positive in that it provides the energy to tackle a big test, presentation, or sports event. Too much stress, however, can create unnecessary hardship and challenge. Adults can sometimes be unaware when their children or teens are experiencing overwhelming feelings of stress. Tuning into emotional or behavioral cues is important in identifying potential problems and working with your young person to provide guidance and support to successfully work through difficult times. Here are some tips from the American Psychological Association (APA) on ways to recognize possible signs of stress:

Watch for negative changes in behavior. Youth of all ages, but especially younger children, may find it difficult to recognize and verbalize when they are experiencing stress. For children, stress can manifest itself through changes in behavior. Common changes can include acting irritable or moody, withdrawing from activities that used to give them pleasure, routinely expressing worries, complaining more than usual about school, crying, displaying surprising fearful reactions, clinging to a parent or teacher, sleeping too much or too little, or eating too much or too little. With teens, while spending more time with and confiding in peers is a normal part of growing up, significantly avoiding parents, abandoning long-time friendships for a new set of peers, or expressing excessive hostility toward family members, may indicate that the teen is experiencing significant stress. While negative behavior is not always linked to excessive stress, negative changes in behavior are almost always a clear indication that something is wrong. Adults will want to pay attention to these behaviors and determine an appropriate response or intervention.

Understand that “feeling sick” may be caused by stress. Stress can also appear in physical symptoms such as stomach aches and headaches. If a child makes excessive trips to the school nurse or complains of frequent stomachaches or headaches (when they have been given a clean bill of health by their physician), or if these complaints increase in certain situations (e.g., before a big test) that child may be experiencing significant stress.

Be aware of how your child or teen interacts with others. Sometimes a child or teen may seem like his or her usual self at home but be acting out in unusual ways in other settings. It is important for parents to network with one another so that they can come to know how child or teen is doing in the world around them. In addition to communicating with other parents, being in contact with teachers, school administrators, and leaders of extracurricular activities can help parents tap into their child or teen’s thoughts, feelings and behaviors, and be aware of any sources of concern.

Listen and translate. Because children are often not familiar with the word stress and its meaning, they may express feelings of distress through other words such as “worried,” “confused,” “annoyed,” and “angry.” Children and teens may also express feelings of stress by saying negative things about themselves, others, or the world around them (e.g. “No one likes me,” “I’m stupid,” “Nothing is fun.”). It is important for parents to listen for these words and statements and try to figure out why your child or teen is saying them and whether they seem to indicate a source or sources of stress.

Seek support. Parents, children, and teens do not need to tackle overwhelming stress on their own. If a parent is concerned that his or her child or teen is experiencing significant symptoms of stress on a regular basis, including, but not limited to those described above, it can be helpful to work with a licensed mental health professional, such as a psychologist. Psychologists have special training to help people identify problems and develop effective strategies to resolve overwhelming feelings of stress.

For additional information on stress and lifestyle and behavior, visit www.apahelpcenter.org, read APA’s Mind/Body Health campaign blog www.yourmindyourbody.org, and follow @apahelpcenter on Twitter.

Special thanks to psychologists Mary Alvord, Ph.D. and David J. Palmiter, Jr., Ph.D., ABPP for their assistance and expertise.

Youth Mental Health

Children's Mental Health Matters

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Consequences of Mental Illness May Be Prevented

Although there can be a genetic or biological component to mental illness, and many children live in unsafe environments that put them "at-risk" of developing mental health problems, the consequences of mental illness may often be prevented through early intervention. At the very least, it is possible to delay mental illness and/or lessen symptoms. The best way to promote children's mental health is to build up their strengths, help to "protect" them from risks and give them tools to succeed in life.

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Know the signs

If there is concern that a child may be experiencing a mental health problem, it is important for adults to seek help from a doctor or mental health professional. Just like with physical illness, treating mental health problems early may help to prevent a more serious illness from developing in the future. Consider consulting a professional if a child you know:

- Feels very sad, hopeless or irritable
- Feels overly anxious or worried
- Is scared and fearful; has frequent nightmares
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- Uses alcohol or drugs
- Avoids people; wants to be alone all of the time
- Hears voices or sees things that aren't there
- Can't concentrate, sit still, or focus attention
- Needs to wash, clean things, or perform certain rituals many times a day
- Talks about suicide or death
- Hurts other people or animals; or damages property
- Has major changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Loses interest in friends or things usually enjoyed
- Falls behind in school or earns lower grades

Unsure? Try a mental health screen.

Taking a mental health screening at www.MHAscreening.org is one of the quickest and easiest ways to determine whether you or a loved one are experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition.

- The [Parent Test](#) is for parents of young people to determine if their child's emotions, attention, or behaviors might be signs of a problem.
- The [Youth Test](#) is for young people (age 11-17) who are concerned that their emotions, attention, or behaviors might be signs of a problem.

What Parents Can Do

- Care for your children's mental health just as you do for their physical health.
- Pay attention to warning signs, and if you're concerned there might be a problem seek professional help.
- Let your children know that everyone experiences pain, fear, sadness, worry, and anger and that these emotions are a normal part of life; encourage them to talk about their concerns and to express their emotions.
- Be a role model—talk about your own feelings, apologize, don't express anger with violence, and use active problem-solving skills.
- Encourage your children's talents and skills, while also accepting their limitations. Celebrate your children's accomplishments.
- Give your children opportunities to learn and grow, including being involved in their school and community and with other caring adults and friends.
- Think of "discipline" as a form of teaching, rather than as physical punishment; set clear expectations and be consistent and fair with consequences for misbehavior; make sure to acknowledge both positive and negative behaviors.

What Teachers Can Do

- Think about mental health as an important component of a child being "ready to learn;" if a child is experiencing mental health problems, he or she will likely have trouble focusing in school.
- Know the warning signs of mental illness and take note of these in your students and seek consultation from the school mental health professional when you have concerns; psychological and/or educational testing may be necessary.
- Use the mental health professional(s) at your school as resources for: preventive interventions with students, including social skills training; education for teachers and students on mental health, crisis counseling for teachers and students following a traumatic event, and classroom management skills training for teachers.
- Allow your students to discuss troubling events at school or in the community; encourage students to verbally describe their emotions.

What Doctors Can Do

- Recognize that mental health is part of a child's overall health.
- Be informed about mental health issues in children and know the warning signs of mental illness.
- Become familiar with mental health screening tools. Use these when a "red flag" is raised or routinely screen for illness, asking both children and parents about a child's emotions and behaviors—especially substance use, depression symptoms, school performance, and talk of suicide.
- Be familiar with the most effective pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic treatment options.

- Make referrals for mental health care when appropriate and follow-up with parents after a referral is made.

Learn more about specific mental health conditions and children

- [ADHD](#) - attentional problems
 - Autism - developmental delay
 - [Bipolar Disorder](#) - depression and high energy
 - [Conduct Disorder](#) - behavioral problems
 - [Depression](#) - sadness
 - [Grief](#) - coping with loss
 - [Suicide](#) - thoughts of death/dying
 - [Substance use](#) - drinking and using drugs
-

Further reading on youth mental health

- [Bipolar Disorder in Children](#)
- [Bullying: LGBT Youth](#)
- [Bullying: Tips for Parents](#)
- [Depression in Teens](#)
- [Healthy Mental and Emotional Development](#)
- [Helping Children Cope With Loss](#)
- [Helping Children Cope With Tragedy Related Anxiety](#)
- [Helping Children Deal With Deployment](#)
- [How to Teach Your Child Body Positivity](#)
- [Military Mental Health: Reconnecting With Your Children](#)
- [Parenting](#)
- [Psychosis \(Schizophrenia\) in Children and Youth](#)
- [Recognizing Mental Health Problems In Children](#)
- [Talking to Adolescents: Noticing the Symptoms](#)
- [Talking to Adolescents: Starting the Conversation](#)
- [Talking to Adolescents: What To Do and Where To Go](#)
- [Talking To Kids About Fear And Violence](#)
- [Talking To Kids About School Safety](#)
- [What Every Child Needs For Good Mental Health](#)

Free Back to School Toolkit

MHA's Back to School Toolkit - developed each year and released in mid-August in anticipation of the start of the new school year - provides free resources, tools, tips, and information on early identification themes and Before Stage 4 messaging.

[Learn more about MHA's Back to School Toolkit](#)

Help is Available

Mental disorders in children are treatable. Early identification, diagnosis and treatment help children reach their full potential and improve the family dynamic. Children's mental health matters! To learn more, talk to a doctor, mental health professional or visit one of the websites below.

Take the [parent screen](#) to determine if your child's emotions, attention, or behaviors might be signs of a problem.

Resources

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

www.aacap.org

American Psychiatric Association

www.psych.org

American Psychological Association

www.apa.org

Center for Parents and Information Resources

www.parentcenterhub.org

Source: <https://www.mhanational.org/childrens-mental-health>

Helping children cope with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak



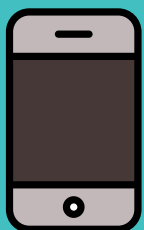
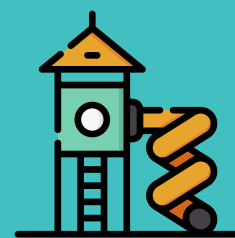
Children may respond to stress in different ways such as being more clingy, anxious, withdrawing, angry or agitated, bedwetting etc.

Respond to your child's reactions in a supportive way, listen to their concerns and give them extra love and attention.

Children need adults' love and attention during difficult times. Give them extra time and attention.

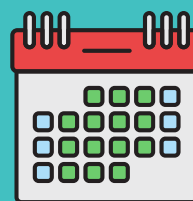
Remember to listen to your children, speak kindly and reassure them.

If possible, make opportunities for the child to play and relax.



Try and keep children close to their parents and family and avoid separating children and their caregivers to the extent possible. If separation occurs (e.g. hospitalization) ensure regular contact (e.g. via phone) and re-assurance.

Keep to regular routines and schedules as much as possible, or help create new ones in a new environment, including school/learning as well as time for safely playing and relaxing.



Provide facts about what has happened, explain what is going on now and give them clear information about how to reduce their risk of being infected by the disease in words that they can understand depending on their age.

This also includes providing information about what could happen in a re-assuring way (e.g. a family member and/or the child may start not feeling well and may have to go to the hospital for some time so doctors can help them feel better).