Hi, I'm Dr. Bronstein, a pediatric infectious disease specialist at Kaiser Permanente.

In this time of school closures and other disruptions to everyday life, many of us parents and caretakers may be wondering how to talk with our kids about COVID-19, and what to do to keep them and others healthy.

THE RISK TO KIDS AND THE ROLE THEY PLAY

It's natural to be concerned in times of uncertainty. And this can be a stressful time for youngsters.

The important thing to know is, based on the most current information about the impact of COVID-19, evidence shows that children who contract the virus recover well, and do not appear to have serious complications.

The greater risk is in unknowingly passing the virus on to individuals who are considered high risk, such as the elderly, or people with underlying health conditions. For example, a grandparent with heart disease would be at higher risk of developing complications from COVID-19.

So keeping children safe and unexposed goes a long way to keep everybody safe.

If your child does have cold or flu-like symptoms, it's important to keep him or her home, away from crowded spaces and vulnerable populations. Keep your child comfortable, and be sure to call your doctor for further instructions.

Children count on routines. Big changes like school closings could be unsettling to them. Your words and actions can go a long way to reassure them.

Talk with children directly about what's going on. Let kids know that children are not getting severely ill from the coronavirus, and that they will be okay.

The reason that they might have to stay home is because we're all doing our best to protect our friends and neighbors, and slow down the spread of the virus so that more people don't get sick.

REINFORCE HEALTHY HABITS

Make sure they know that they can play a helpful role in protecting themselves, their family and the community.

By doing things like washing hands frequently, sneezing or coughing into their elbow, and staying away from others when they're sick, they can help everyone stay healthy.
It's best to relay this information in short, brief conversations. And find a time each day to check in and ask what they're hearing, and if they have any questions. This will allow you to correct any misinformation they've heard, answer their questions, and offer reassurance.

**MAINTAIN STRUCTURE AND ROUTINES**

Providing children with daily structure lowers their levels of distress and increases their ability to cope with uncertainty and change.

With children home from school, it can be helpful to set a routine for the day. Decide on a schedule that includes a time to get up, a time for schoolwork, lunchtime, and a few structured fun activities. Keep in place any existing routine such as story time, evening TV and bedtime rituals.

**MANAGE MEDIA EXPOSURE**

Modeling healthy habits for children shows them how we can all work together to do the right thing.

This includes managing media coverage of COVID-19. Consider limiting news and social media to a specific time each day, be mindful of news running in the background with your children present, or frequently discussing the news when they're in the room.

Try to substitute things that support positive coping, playing a game together, watching a funny show, or making a gratitude list before bedtime.

**PRIORITIZE SELF-CARE**

Most importantly, don't forget to prioritize your own self-care.

Simple things like getting enough rest, eating well, exercising regularly and seeking support from trusted friends and family can increase your resilience in stressful times.

The more you can do to keep yourself healthy and balanced, the more you'll be helping your child feel safe, calm and worry free.