



Guidance for parents

Talking to your children about ebola

Fear is a natural response to the unknown and the unfamiliar. It is OK for both kids and their parents to feel and express fear in response to the current situation with the ebola virus here in the United States. It is important to remember that feelings of fear are real but the risk of ebola to individuals here in Colorado is very low.

Parents can help by doing the following:

- Manage your own reactions and provide children with age-appropriate, basic facts. Know the risk factors for exposure to the virus: close contact with bodily fluids of a person symptomatic for ebola or travel to Sierra Leone, Liberia or Guinea. Know how the virus spreads: only through close contact with bodily fluids of a symptomatic person. Ebola is not spread through the air, in food or in water.
- Assure your children they are safe and remind them it is your job as their parent to keep them safe as much as possible. Share with your children that we have a strong health care and public health system and that ebola is rare. Explain to your children that situations they may have seen on TV are due to travel to an area of the world that does not have the advanced health care we have here. The risk here is very low.
- Discuss with your children how to prevent the spread of disease. Discuss the importance of hand washing; not touching your eyes, nose or mouth without washing your hands; not sharing drinks or food, etc, but keep this age-appropriate and don't overwhelm your child with responsibility.
- Acknowledge and validate your child's feelings and consider using this discussion as an educational opportunity. Ask questions to find out what they know, and keep your questions age-appropriate:
 - "What do you know about ebola?"
 - "Have you heard anything from your friends or teachers about ebola?"
 - "Are you scared?"
 - "Are you sad?"
 - "Are you anxious?"

Consider providing historical context, discussing science, medicine, geography or other relevant issues that arise during the conversation in an age-appropriate way.

- Consider limiting exposure to media for children who are particularly anxious.