The effects of COVID-19 pandemic on children

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Several studies have documented the damaging effects of psychological stress due to negative events in children.

Anxiety, depression, lethargy, impaired social interaction, and reduced appetite are commonly reported manifestations.

In the course of adverse events, children are often forced to stay home for long periods due to enforced isolation and school closure, resulting in limited connection with classmates and reduced physical activity.
Early Investigation of Chinese Children’s Behavioral and Emotional Reactions to COVID-19

Children are not indifferent to the dramatic impact of the COVID-19 epidemic.

They experience fears, uncertainties, and physical and social isolation and may miss school for a prolonged period.
using an online questionnaire, the most common psychological and behavioral problems among 320 children and adolescents (168 girls and 142 boys) aged 3-18 were:

- clinginess, distraction, irritability, and fear of asking questions about the epidemic (unpublished data, Shaanxi Province during the second week of February 2020).
The questionnaire, which was completed by the parents, incorporated the DSM-5 criteria:

- Fear of asking about the epidemics and the health of relatives
- Poor sleep including nightmares
- Poor appetite, physical discomfort, agitation and inattention clinginess, and separation problems
A preliminary study conducted in the Shaanxi province during the COVID-19 epidemic by the China-EPAUNEPSA collaborative working group showed:

- Children in the younger age group (3-6 years) were more likely than older children to manifest symptoms, such as clinginess and fear that family members could contract the infection ($P = .002$).

- Children aged 6 to 18 years were more likely to show inattention ($P = .049$) and persistent inquiry ($P = .003$).

- Clinging, inattention, and irritability were the most severe psychological conditions demonstrated by the children in all age groups.
- The rates of fear, anxiety, and other emotions were higher in children residing in highly epidemic areas.

- Media entertainment was largely successfully used by families over reading and physical exercise as a means to relieve their children’s distress and address their concerns regarding the negative condition they were experiencing.
The Importance of Nurturing Resilience in Children Exposed to Epidemics

Resilience, the personal attributes that help children manage everything from little disappointments to big life traumas, should be nurtured and implemented by public health programs in children and teens living in areas hit by calamities such as epidemics.
فهرمان من، توبي!

قصه صيروه با كرونا برای کودکان

ترجمه

انتشارات میاریزه‌ای
کرونا کووید 19
ویژگی کودکان

نقشه‌های امیرعلی
برای شکست کرونا

نویسنده: جاینت رایبت
مترجم: شهرزاد امینیان
ناشر: نشر فرشته
Helping Children Cope With Changes Resulting From COVID-19

Updated March 25, 2020
Stay Calm, Listen, and Offer Reassurance

✔ Be a role model. Children will react to and follow your reactions. They learn from your example.

✔ Be aware of how you talk about COVID-19.
  ➢ remind your child that your family is healthy, and you are going to do everything within your power to keep loved ones safe and well.
  ➢ Carefully listen or have them draw or write out their thoughts and feelings and respond with truth and reassurance.
Stay Calm, Listen, And Offer Reassurance

✓ Explain social distancing.
  ➢ Social distancing means staying away from others until the risk of contracting COVID-19 is under control.
  ➢ Showing older children the "flatten the curve" charts will help them grasp the significance of social distancing.
  ➢ Explain that while we don't know how long it will take to "flatten the curve" to reduce the number of those infected, we do know that this is a critical time—we must follow the guidelines of health experts to do our part.
Stay Calm, Listen, and Offer Reassurance

✓ **Demonstrate deep breathing.** Deep breathing is a valuable tool for calming the nervous system. Do breathing exercises with your children.

✓ **Focus on the positive.**
  - Celebrate having more time to spend as a family.
  - Make it as fun as possible.
  - Do family projects.
  - Organize belongings, create masterpieces.
  - Sing, laugh, and go outside, if possible, to connect with nature and get needed exercise.
  - Allow older children to connect with their friends virtually.
Stay Calm, Listen, and Offer Reassurance

Establish and maintain a daily routine.

- Keeping a regular schedule provides a sense of control, predictability, calm, and well-being.
- It also helps children and other family members respect others’ need for quiet or uninterrupted time and when they can connect with friends virtually.

✔ Identify projects that might help others.

- writing letters to the neighbors or others who might be stuck at home alone or to healthcare workers
- sending positive messages over social media
- reading a favorite children’s book on a social media platform for younger children to hear.

✔ Offer lots of love and affection.
Monitor Television Viewing and Social Media

- Watching continual updates on COVID-19 may increase fear and anxiety.
- Dispel rumors and inaccurate information.
- Older children, in particular, may be accessing a great deal of information online and from friends that contains inaccuracies.
- Talk to your child about factual disease information.
- Provide alternatives. Engage your child in games or other exciting activities instead.
Take Time To Talk

- Let your children's questions guide you
- Answer their questions truthfully, but don't offer unnecessary details or facts.
- Don't avoid giving them the information that experts indicate as crucial to your children's well-being.
- Often, children and youth do not talk about their concerns because they are confused or don't want to worry loved ones.
- Children always feel empowered if they can control some aspects of their life. A sense of control reduces fear.
Keep Explanations Age-appropriate

- Early elementary school children. Provide brief, simple information that balances COVID-19 facts with appropriate reassurances that adults are there to help keep them healthy and to take care of them if they do get sick. Give simple examples of the steps people make every day to stop germs and stay healthy, such as washing hands. Use language such as "adults are working hard to keep you safe."
Keep Explanations Age-appropriate

- **Upper elementary and early middle school children.** This age group often is more vocal in asking questions about whether they indeed are safe and what will happen if COVID-19 spreads in their area.

- They may need assistance separating reality from rumor and fantasy.

- Discuss the efforts national, state, and community leaders are doing to prevent germs from spreading.
Keep Explanations Age-appropriate

- Upper middle and high school students.
- Issues can be discussed in more depth.
- Refer them to appropriate sources of COVID-19 facts.
- Provide honest, accurate, and factual information about the current status of COVID-19.
- Engage them in decision-making about family plans, scheduling, and helping with chores at home.
- For all children, encourage them to verbalize their thoughts and feelings. Be a good listener!
Stay Connected to School

- Locate learning resources.
- Identify additional resources
- Stay in touch.
- Connect with school staff
Model Basic Hygiene and Healthy Lifestyle Practices

- Practice daily good hygiene.

- Foster a sense of control
  - Offering guidance on what your child/children can do to prevent infection offers them a greater sense of control, which reduces anxiety.

- Build the immune system.
  - Encourage your child to eat a balanced diet, get enough sleep, and exercise regularly; this will help them develop a robust immune system to fight off illness.
Be Aware of Your Children’s Mental Health

- Most children will manage well with the support of parents and other family members, even if showing signs of some anxiety or concerns, such as difficulty sleeping or concentrating.

- Risk factors can include a pre-existing mental health problem, prior traumatic experiences or abuse, family instability, or the loss of a loved one.

- Parents and caregivers should contact a professional if children exhibit significant changes in behavior or any of the following symptoms for more than 2 weeks.
Be Aware of Your Children’s Mental Health

- **Preschoolers**—thumb sucking, bedwetting, clinging to parents, sleep disturbances, loss of appetite, fear of the dark, regression in behavior, and withdrawal.

- **Elementary school children**—irritability, aggressiveness, clinginess, nightmares, school avoidance, poor concentration, and withdrawal from activities and friends.

- **Adolescents**—sleeping and eating disturbances, agitation, increase in conflicts, physical complaints, delinquent behavior, and poor concentration.