



Defense Health Agency (DHA) Clinical Communities Speaker Series

22 April 2021 CCSS: Children and Youth in Transition

S07: Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Children and Youth: Emotional, Behavioral, and Education Based Changes

Resource List

Regardless of a child's age, they may feel upset or have other strong emotions after an emergency. Some children react right away, while others may show signs of difficulty much later. How a child reacts and the common signs of distress can vary according to the child's age, previous experiences, and how the child typically copes with stress. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) outlined strategies for [caring for children during a disaster including how to help them cope with emergencies](#) (2020).

The attention of the world is rightly focused on measures to mitigate the transmission and economic effect of the 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In this rapidly changing situation, media and social conversations are entirely dominated by the outbreak, and children are exposed to large amounts of information and high levels of stress and anxiety in the adults around them. Simultaneously, children are experiencing substantial changes to their daily routine and social infrastructure, which ordinarily foster resilience to challenging events. Parents would do anything to protect their children from distress and might avoid talking about difficult feelings and events. However, research shows that even children as young as two years are aware of the changes around them. Children's understanding evolves throughout childhood and adolescence. Thus, when adults talk to children, the information provided needs to take into account the child's age and level of understanding. Sensitive and effective communication about life-threatening illness has major benefits for children and their family's long-term psychological wellbeing. The authors of this article highlighted the importance of [Protecting the psychological health of children through effective communication about COVID-19](#) (2020).

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic is causing substantial morbidity and mortality, straining health care systems, shutting down economies, and closing school districts. While it is a priority to mitigate its immediate impact, it is important to call attention to the pandemic's longer-term effect on children's health; COVID-19, via these school closures, may exacerbate the epidemic of childhood obesity and increase disparities in obesity risk. Thus the authors of the article, [COVID-19-related school closings and risk of weight gain among children](#) (2020) noted that the COVID-19 pandemic will exacerbate the risk factors for weight gain in school aged children.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) published the fact sheet [Talking with children: Tips for caregivers, parents, and teachers during infectious disease outbreaks](#) (2020) which provides parents, caregivers, and teachers with strategies for helping children manage their stress during an infectious disease outbreak. It also describes potential reactions among youth and the support adults can provide to help them during these experiences.

The World Health Organization (WHO) released a [Short information flyer on how to help children cope with fears and stress during the pandemic](#) (2020). This flyer includes practical guidance on explaining the facts to children and helping them understand the situation without being afraid.



Defense Health Agency (DHA) Clinical Communities Speaker Series

References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, September 01). Helping children cope with emergencies. <https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/helping-children-cope.html>

Dalton, L., Rapa, E., & Stein, A. (2020). Protecting the psychological health of children through effective communication about COVID-19. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 4(5), 346-347.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/s2352-4642\(20\)30097-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2352-4642(20)30097-3)

Rundle, A. G., Park, Y., Herbstman, J. B., Kinsey, E. W., & Wang, Y. C. (2020). COVID-19 related school closings and risk of weight gain among children. *Obesity*, 28(6), 1008-1009.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/oby.2281>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2020). Talking with children: Tips for caregivers, parents, and teachers during infectious disease outbreaks.
https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/SAMHSA_Digital_Download/PEP20-01-01-006508.pdf

World Health Organization. (2020). Helping children cope with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak.
<https://safe.menlosecurity.com/doc/docview/viewer/docN90FDE61982651d94fb6c71b8b64f4f73eb981c2b0871718bbaa9b1e00cbc43ab28ad6ca858c>