

Supporting Families During Well-Child and Other Visits: New Issues in the COVID-19 Environment

April 2020



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Child Trauma

Federicka Wolman, MD

Assessing Trauma Associated with COVID-19

Explore how the family is coping and identify any traumatic ramifications of the virus. Ask families about:

- Changes they've made or that have occurred as a result of COVID-19
- How things are going
- What is going well
- Where are the challenges?

Potential challenges may include:

- Fear of the illness itself - hygiene and safety
- Child/family member with underlying health conditions
- Illness or death of a family member or close friend
- Job related - working from home, loss of job, essential worker working out of the home
- No school - concerns about keeping up with schoolwork, issues with children at home all day
- Getting food and supplies, e.g., diapers, cleaning supplies.

Helpful Resources

For families

- National Child Traumatic Stress Network: <https://www.nctsn.org/>
- American Academy of Pediatrics: <https://www.aap.org/en-us/Pages/Default.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- healthychildren.org: <https://healthychildren.org/>
- PBS Kids for Parents: pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-coronavirus
- American Psychological Association: <https://www.apa.org/research/action/children-disabilities-covid-19>
- 211 of Connecticut: <https://uwc.211ct.org/coronavirus-covid-19-information/>

For providers

- Kids Mental Health Info.com: <https://www.kidsmentalhealthinfo.com/>
- The Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut: <https://www.chdi.org/>
- Access Mental Health CT: <http://www.accessmhct.com/>

Domestic Violence

Ashley Starr Frechette, MPH

CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Talking with Families During COVID-19

Educate every patient about domestic violence resources.

- Families are experiencing increased stress and isolation.
- It may be difficult to reach out for help with everyone at home.
- Abusive partners may withhold necessary items or share misinformation about the pandemic to control or frighten survivors.
 - Ex: Withhold insurance cards, threaten to cancel insurance, or prevent survivors from seeking medical attention if they need it.
- Travel restrictions may impact a survivor's escape or safety plan.
- CT Law Enforcement is not responding to Medical 911 calls during the pandemic making it more important than ever for medical professionals to educate or display IPV resources.

Talking with Families During COVID-19

Sample DV Telemedicine Script

With increased isolation and stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic...

- We have started talking about intimate partner violence with all of our patients/families because it can have such serious impacts on health.
- We want to let you know that Connecticut has a 24/7 IPV hotline, called Safe Connect. Safe Connect Advocates understand complicated relationships and all services are free, safe, confidential and voluntary.
- If you have anyone that might benefit from these resources, please let them know that they can call **888.774.2900** or email and live chat at www.CTSafeConnect.org.

Helpful resources for Health Professionals utilizing telemedicine:

- Educate every patient, every time.
- Ask patients what time works best to increase privacy and clarify the best contact information to reach the patient.
- Ask patients to take phone calls off speaker phone and/or utilize headphones during telemedicine appointments.
- Let patients know that Safe Connect is 100% confidential. They DO NOT have to say their name when they call, email or live chat.
- Health Professionals who need resources or have questions can speak with Safe Connect Advocates.
- Contact Ashley Starr Frechette, Director of Health Professional Outreach, if you need further resources or trainings.
astarrfrechette@ctcadv.org

Helpful Resources

CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence Resources:

- [Safe Connect 24/7 Certified IPV Advocates](#)
- [CCADV Newsletter](#)
- [CCADV Facebook Updates: CT Safe Connect](#)
- [CCADV- Health Professional Outreach Project](#)
- [National DV Resources](#)

Is there anyone in your life who is hurting
or threatening you in any way?

Safe Connect is here to help!

Domestic violence advocates are available
throughout the COVID-19 outbreak to
provide information, counseling, safety
planning, legal advocacy, and a safe
connection to your local domestic
violence organization for ongoing support.

CALL • CHAT • EMAIL • 24/7



CTSafeConnect.org | (888) 774-2900*

**Texting is temporarily unavailable.*

CTSafeConnect

All services are confidential, safe, free and voluntary.

Food and Nutrition

Nancy Trout, MD, MPH

Connecticut Children's

Talking with Families During COVID-19

How are you obtaining food?

- Access to food is becoming an increasing need due to agency and school closures and social isolation/self-quarantines.
- Some businesses offer grocery delivery services (Peapod, Walmart, Amazon, Instacart).

Helpful Resources

Helpful resources for obtaining food (from 211 website)

- <https://uwc.211ct.org/covid19resources/#Food>

Emergency Food

For the links below, click the link, enter your zip code and click the search button

- [Food Pantries](#)
 - [Foodshare Mobile Site Schedule](#)
 - [Connecticut Food Bank Mobile Pantry Schedule](#)
- [Soup Kitchens](#)
- [Home Delivered Meals](#)

Helpful Resources

Food for school children

- Some school districts are continuing to provide meal service during extended school closures due to COVID-19. The response varies by town.
- The State Department of Education has links from their website <https://portal.ct.gov/sde> located in the yellow banner indicating which school districts are providing emergency food for students and locations of community emergency meal programs for children.
- To find contact information for a local school district, [visit this link](#) and search by a specific Connecticut zip code or town. Then click on the school district's website.

State/Federal food benefit programs

- [Food Stamps/SNAP](#)
- [WIC](#)

Helpful Resources

Other helpful information

- End Hunger Connecticut! SNAP/Food Stamp Application Assistance and Outreach/Telephone Information Line - 866-974-7627
- Some Cities/Towns although they may be closed are offering pre-bagged food for residents. **It is advised to CALL the City/Town or the Senior Center to find out what help might be available**
 - To find a **City/Town local office**, [click this link](#), enter your zip code and click the search button.
 - To find a **local Senior Center**, [click this link](#), enter your zip code and click the search button.

Home Safety

Kevin Borrup, DrPH, JD, MPH
Connecticut Children's

Talking with Families During COVID-19

Young Children

- For children ages birth through four years old, check the rooms that young children will be playing in, cover electrical outlets which can pose a risk of electrocution, and make sure that toys with small parts are not accessible as these pose a choking risk.

Poisoning

- With children home 24/7, be sure that all poisons, medicines, and cleaners are stored up and out of reach. If you can lock up these potential poisons, even better.

Burns/Fires

- Supervise all children in the kitchen, simply using a microwave can result in a serious scald burn if a hot liquid spills. Anything left on the stove too long can pose a risk of fire. Practice evacuating your home and meeting at an agreed upon location.

Mental Health

- These can be challenging times for children and adults. Talk to your children, ask them how they are doing, what they fear, and provide honest age appropriate answers.

Helpful Resources

For Families

- Safe Kids Worldwide
<https://www.safekids.org/>
- Gizmo's Guide to Mental Health – for kids
<https://www.gizmo4mentalhealth.org/>
- Preventing Injuries and Violence Related to the COVID-19 pandemic
<https://advancingkids.org/2020/03/27/preventing-injuries-and-violence-related-to-covid-19-pandemic/>

Maintaining Social Relationships and Self-care

Tesha Tramontano-Kelly
CT Family Support Network

Talking with Families During COVID-19

Tips for parent and caregiver self-care

- It is very important to create a self-care routine to reduce stress, anxiety, and isolation.
 - Breathing exercises, even if only for a minute or two
 - Meditation
 - Reading
 - Walking
 - Listening to music
 - Remind parents that the house cleaning can wait!
 - Keep informed, but not obsessed
 - Make a news/information routine; Limit the amount you read or how much news you watch

Helpful Resources

Maintaining social relationships

- Join an email distribution list.
 - Email distributions lists are a great way to learn about resources and stay informed.
 - CTFSN's email distribution list can be found at:
<https://ctfsn.org/join-us/>
- Stay connected with family and friends.
 - Skype, Facebook messenger video calling, Zoom calls, What's Up app and FaceTime are all great ways to connect with and physically see family and friends while social distancing.
 - Helpful information about Google technology can be found at:
https://drive.google.com/.../1sV1OE74lt65hhK_7qkPb71FNr.../view...

Helpful Resources

Maintaining social relationships

- Join an online support group.

The CT Family Support Network (CTFSN) and many other organizations have on-line trainings and support groups for families.

- [CTFSN Facebook Page](#)
- [CTFSN Deaf or Hard of Hearing Learning Community](#)
- [CTFSN Creative Housing](#)
- [CTFSN Group for Parents of Adults with Special Needs](#)
- [CTFSN Grupo de Apoyo de Necesidades Especiales en Español](#)
- [CTFSN Support Group for Northwestern Connecticut](#)
- [CTFN Bookworms: Talking about Special Books with Special Families](#)
- [CTFSN and SARAH Inc. Family Support Community](#)
- [CTFSN Creativity Activity Positivity](#)
- [Building a Supportive Community in Connecticut](#)
- [Special Needs Support and Self-Care for Parents – You Are Not Alone!](#)

Mental Health: Family Capacity to Support Children and Teens with Mental Health Challenges

Barbara Ward-Zimmerman, PhD

Talking with Families During COVID-19

Assessing a family's capacity to support children and teens with mental health challenges during the pandemic

- **It is important to assess how children and adolescents with mental health challenges, such as anxiety and/or depression, are doing in the face of COVID-19.**
 - Clinical symptoms may be exacerbated or take new forms during this crisis and those children with previously sub-clinical symptoms may begin to display full-blown disorders.
- **Ask: On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being 'extremely poorly' and 10 being 'exceptionally well,' rate how (child's *name*) is adjusting to the changes in his/her life caused by the virus.**
 - If parent reports that their child is **doing well, ask:**
 - For specific examples of how the child is behaving, getting along with parents and siblings, staying on top of schoolwork, keeping connected with friends, being helpful at home, engaging in physical activity.
 - AND, ask parent what he/she is doing to promote such good adjustment and healthy behavior (*reinforcing parental efforts during this stress-filled time will go a long way*).

Talking with Families During COVID-19

- If parent reports that their child is **doing poorly**, ask:

1. What is your child's understanding of, and emotional response to, the virus?

- If parent is unsure, encourage them to ask their child what they know and how they feel about it.

2. Please provide examples of your child's concerning thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

- If parent's response is vague, ask parent to describe a recent day in detail, e.g., what time did the child rise, when and where in the house did they eat, how did they spend their time, and when did they go to sleep?
- Listen for symptoms of emotional distress, and if concerns are still unclear, probe about possible signs, e.g., frequently asks about the health and safety of family members, has difficulty separating from parent(s), complains of stomachaches, headaches, or bodily pain more than usual and has no fever, displays excessive anger and/or sadness (frequent meltdowns), expresses thoughts of suicide, experiences difficulty concentrating, expresses irrational fears, sleeps too much or too little, fears sleeping alone, has a decreased or increased appetite, is not completing school assignments, refuses to connect with friends and family online, is using drugs &/or alcohol.
- Symptoms of a previously diagnosed obsessive-compulsive disorder may be intensified.
 - Assess whether increased 'symptoms' represent a realistic understanding of the true risks of contamination, and are thus appropriate protections from illness, or, demonstrate unhelpful intrusive thinking and/or repetitive behavior.

Talking with Families During COVID-19

- If parent reports that their child is **doing poorly, ask:**
 - 3. Does your child/teen meet regularly with a counselor/therapist by Telehealth** (phone or video)?
 - If not, question what barriers are getting in the way and offer to assist.
 - 4. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being 'not at all confident' and 10 being 'highly confident,' rate how confident you feel in your ability to help your child cope with the changes in his/her life caused by the virus.**
 - Offer psychoeducation and resources (see following slides).
 - If suicide risk or other serious symptoms are present, instruct parent to call 2-1-1 (then 1, then 1 again) to access psychiatric consultation services.
 - Offer assistance to make the call (if needed) AND follow-up.

Helpful Resources

Psychoeducational tips for helping families provide emotional support to their children and teens during the pandemic: Parental strategies for helping children and teens manage anxiety and depression

- **Initiate conversations about the child's feelings regarding the virus** and its impact on daily life.
 - Begin with open-ended questions.
 - Acknowledge and normalize child's legitimate concerns while remaining positive and calm.
 - Provide age-appropriate reassurance that this unique time is temporary and experts are working to keep people safe and healthy.
 - Help child to feel prepared.
 - Focus on what is in their power, e.g., physical distancing from those outside the immediate family, staying healthy by eating well and washing hands regularly.
- **Model and reinforce exerting control** over daily routines and activities, e.g., keeping a schedule, completing academic assignments, exercising (physical activity alleviates anxiety and depression), getting outside in nature (if possible), socializing remotely, having fun.
- **Remind the child of times they overcame past challenges**, highlighting their actions that led to success.

Helpful Resources

- **Facilitate Teletherapy visits** with counselor/therapist (some insurance plans now allow phone and video conferences to be conducted at no cost to the family, many therapists accepting new patients).
- **Practice relaxation techniques as a family** (e.g., guided imagery, breath focus, mindfulness, yoga).
- **Limit exposure to news** (TV, internet, and social media coverage); watch/listen with children to filter what they see and hear.
- **Provide daily opportunities for children to talk about their feelings**
 - Routine family dinners offer times for 'checking in.'
 - Encourage child to reach out to you, and if desirable, additional trusted adults such as a grandparent, when feeling alone, sad, agitated, or scared.
- **Be a good listener**
 - Pay full attention.
 - No judgments, no lectures – accept your child's feelings.
 - Use active listening – reflect back to your child their basic message and feelings in slightly different words (e.g., if child angrily says they are 'bored because they can't hang out with friends,' rephrase and say, 'sounds like you are feeling lonely and are tired of this isolation business').

Helpful Resources

Center for Disease Control, [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

- Provides tips for caregivers on how to talk to children about COVID-19 as well as different reactions that children may have and how to manage these reactions.

Child Mind Institute, [childmind.org](https://www.childmind.org)

- Posts a daily video with tips for supporting families through the coronavirus crisis.
- Tips for Talking to Kids About the Coronavirus

Child Study Center at NYU Langone Health, [nyulangone.org](https://www.nyulangone.org)

- Provides an educational webinar on general information about COVID- 19, strategies on how to talk to children about COVID-19, and how to manage symptoms of children with different diagnoses (e.g., ADHD-ODD) during this time.

Emerging Minds, [emergingminds.com.au](https://www.emergingminds.com.au)

- Presents information on how to support children and young people during COVID-19.

Helpful Resources

Healthcare Toolbox, <https://www.healthcaretoolbox.org/tools-and-resources/covid19>

- Offers useful guidance for parents in toolbox entitled 'Helping My Child to Cope, COVID-19.'

Nationwide Children's Hospital, Behavioral Health Resources for Coronavirus, [nationwidechildrens.org](https://www.nationwidechildrens.org)

- Provides caregivers with tips on how to talk to children about COVID-19, how to stay mentally healthy, how to manage indoor boredom, and a variety of other useful ideas.

The National Association of School Psychologists, [nasponline.org](https://www.nasponline.org)

- Offers tips for parents/caregivers on how to talk to children about COVID and how to navigate school changes during this time.

Helpful Resources

Apps For Relieving Child Stress

- Headspace for Kids (cost associated)
- Stop, Breathe & Think (free download)
- Smiling Mind (free download)
- Sleep Meditations for Kids (free download)
- Ninjafocus (offering all content for free due to school closures)
- Breathe, Think, Do. Help a Sesame Street monster calm down and solve everyday problems in this interactive game (free download)

YouTube Videos: For Relieving Child Stress

- GoNoodle (Movement and Mindfulness Videos)
- Try Kid's Yoga

Free Mindfulness Classes for Kids, mindfulschools.org

Mental Health: Parental Stress and Anxiety

Barbara Ward-Zimmerman, PhD

Talking with Families During COVID-19

Assessing Parental Stress in the Context of COVID-19

- Since parental well-being significantly impacts child/adolescent functioning, it is important to evaluate how parents are coping with the pandemic and its consequences. Youth with preexisting mental health challenges are particularly vulnerable when their parents are experiencing behavioral health struggles.
- **Ask: On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being 'not at all' and 10 being 'off the charts,' how worried/anxious are you about the virus and its impact on your family?**

Talking with Families During COVID-19

Ask parents with ratings of 4 or greater: What specifically is contributing to your stress level? If only a general response is provided, offer options, such as:

- Worries about your family's physical health (e.g., grandparent/child/self)
- Concerns about your family's emotional well-being (spouse or partner/children/self)
- Financial concerns
- If working from home: can't concentrate, difficulty protecting uninterrupted time
- If 'essential staff:' worries that you can contract the virus and spread it to your family, kids are on their own for extended periods of time
- Difficulty juggling roles – pulled between work demands and overseeing your children
- Feel ill-equipped to help children with school assignments
- Kids are not getting along, you and your spouse/partner are not getting along
- Feel alone

Talking with Families During COVID-19

Psychoeducational tips for helping parents manage their own anxiety in the context of COVID-19: Useful Messages

- **Anxiety/worry is normal**
 - “The key is keeping your anxiety at a level that is helpful, for example, as a motivator to keep you and your children safe, rather than letting it get the best of you.”
- **Use good coping strategies to keep your anxiety in check**
 - BREATHE: Mindful deep breathing is calming; take low and slow breaths several times a day.
 - MAINTAIN GOOD HEALTH HABITS: Eat healthy, limit alcohol and recreational drug use, prioritize exercise, get some sunlight.
 - ENGAGE IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: Aerobic exercise reduces stress (e.g., walk, play ball with children).

Talking with Families During COVID-19

- STAY CONNECTED
 - Reach out to family and friends, e.g., call, Facetime, Zoom, Skype, Google Hangouts.
 - Participate in Teletherapy visits with counselor/therapist &/or an online support group (some insurance plans now allow phone and video conferences to be conducted at no cost to family, many therapists accepting new patients).
- IMPOSE STRUCTURE AT HOME
 - Create a schedule for each family member.
 - Establish consistent workspaces for yourself and your children.
 - Carry-out daily routines.

Talking with Families During COVID-19

- ADAPTABILITY IS KEY
 - Modify expectations for self and children.
 - Accept that not all will be perfect.
- MAKE TIME FOR FUN AND RELAXATION EACH DAY: Engage in activities you enjoy, both on your own and with your family, e.g., listen to music, dance, play games, bake, read for pleasure.
- SEEK COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE: Local organizations, state services, church.
- SHOW OTHERS KINDNESS, COMPASSION, AND GRATITUDE

Helpful Resources for Decreasing Parental Stress

Working From Home

- Greenbaum, Z. (2020). Psychologists advice for newly remote workers. E-publication: <https://www.apa.org/news/apa/2020/03/newly-remote-workers>
- Harvard Business Review: A Guide for Working (From Home) Parents, hbr.org
- Parent Magazine: How to Master Working from Home While Under Quarantine with Kids, parents.com

Relaxation

- For a very short video to make sure your breathing practice is right, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UB3tSaiEbNY>
- A good app for breathing and relaxation is Breathe2Relax: <http://t2health.dcoe.mil/apps/breathe2relax>
- For a “Relax in a Hurry” see http://www.mbmi.org/basics/mstress_RIAH.asp






















General Guidance for Parents

- The Corona Virus Sanity Guide: <https://www.tenpercent.com/coronavirussanityguide>
- 18 Tips on How to Cope with Children During Quarantine, <https://www.forbes.com>

Guidance for Divorced Parents

- Seven Guidelines for Parents who are Divorced/Separated and Sharing Custody of Children During the COVID19 Pandemic: <https://www.mediate.com>

Smartphone Apps

	7 CUPS Trained, Volunteer Active Listeners for acute or ongoing issues		CBT-I COACH Use with CBT for Insomnia to improve sleep		STOP, BREATHE & THINK (for kids) Brief Meditation
	MOODTOOLS & FEARTOOLS Depression and anxiety resources		DREAM EZ Based on Imagery Rehearsal Therapy (IRT) to diffuse nightmares		HEADSPACE Learn & practice Mindfulness Meditation
	JOYABLE Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for depression <u>and anxiety</u> . <i>Available free by referral</i>		ANGER & IRRITABILITY MANAGEMENT SKILLS Learn to better cope with anger		INSIGHT TIMER Guided meditation for a variety of Learners
	WHAT'S UP? Monitor your mood and apply CBT and ACT Strategies		STAY QUIT COACH Get help with tobacco cessation treatment		MINDFULNESS COACH Learn to practice mindfulness Meditation
	MINDSHIFT Learn to cope with anxiety and fear		BOOSTERBUDDY Help teens to improve resiliency and healthier overall		10% HAPPIER Guides meditation and explains why it is beneficial.
	MOOD COACH Learn and practice behavioral activation to feel better		PARENTING2GO Strengthen your relationship with your children in the moment		BREATHE2RELAX Manage stress by through deep breathing exercises
	POSITIVE ACTIVITY JACKPOT Find local activities to improve mood		MOVING FORWARD Learn problem- solving for better decisions and outcomes		TACTICAL BREATHER Use breathing to control response during times of stress
	MY DIET COACH Help to make manageable lifestyle changes		LOSE IT Calorie and fitness tracking		GOODRX Compare medication prices



YOGA
Yoga by Adriane YouTube
DoYogaWithMe.com
(or YouTube)



Physical Activity

Nancy Trout, MD, MPH

Connecticut Children's

Talking with Families During COVID-19

What is your child doing for physical activity at this time?

- Healthy eating and physical activity are powerful tools to keep us calm, connected and healthy during this pandemic
- Physical activity provides an energy release for kids, gets them off their screens, keeps them busy, and gives them a burst of mood-lifting endorphins
- Make sure kids are engaging in at least 30-60 minutes of physical activity daily
- Get them outside (at a distance from others)

Helpful Resources

- Throw a ball, take a walk or go for a hike, make an obstacle course, ride a bike, play Simon says or hopscotch, put on some music and dance with your child.
- Try online yoga or exercise classes with your child.
- Find new ways to move together.
- <https://advancingkids.org/2020/03/23/pandemic-parenting-healthy-eating-and-activity-for-kids/>
- <https://www.theleangreenbean.com/indoor-activities-for-kids/>

Reorganizing Care Delivery

Lisa Honigfeld, PhD

Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut

Resources to Help You Reorganize Care Delivery

Use telehealth and telephone for some visits:

- Regulations and guidelines (note: these are changing daily):
- https://www.ctdssmap.com/CTPortal/Information/Get%20Download%20File/tabid/44/Default.aspx?Filename=pb20_09.pdf&URI=Bulletins/pb20_09.pdf

Implement new scheduling:

- Consider morning well child visits for young children to ensure that they get their immunizations.

Institute **regular phone hours** for sick visits and triaging.

Stay in Touch with CHDI

Please visit us at

- www.chdi.org
- www.kidsmentalhealthinfo.com

Join our email list for publications and updates on children's health and mental health issues.

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