

As providers of care to children, we want to do whatever we can to insure their health and wellbeing. During the COVID-19 epidemic, our skills, operations, and knowledge are being put to the test. At Comer Children's Hospital of the University of Chicago Medicine, we want to help you through our knowledge sharing systems. To that end, we are sharing this newsletter with each of you with content specific to the care of children in the outpatient area. We are also hosting an ECHO-Chicago ([www.ECHO-Chicago.org](http://www.ECHO-Chicago.org)) session on COVID-19 Wednesday 3/25/2020 and plan to do others so please keep tuned for more info on that. You are hearing a lot about the medical aspects but what about operations and mental health? Here are some tips that might help you and your patients.

Many of you may be asking, is it ok to continue to care for children in the office? Yes, we should continue to take care of children's broad healthcare needs but do so in a manner that limits risk of harm. We do not want elective visits continuing for now, but essential visits are vital for the health of children. Those visits include well child care that is associated with primary immunizations and the care of newborns and infants (i.e., 1 week old, and 1, 2, 4, 6, 12, and 15 month old visits). Older children should only come in for evaluation if there is likely to be an intervention. If you can switch care to telephone or video then do so with proper billing practices that are now allowed under new rules (Illinois waiver info: <https://www.illinois.gov/hfs/SiteCollectionDocuments/1135WaiverRequestFactSheetFINAL.pdf> , and other information about the waiver - (<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/covid19-emergency-declaration-health-care-providers-fact-sheet.pdf>) To limit risk of spread in your offices, we suggest the following steps:

- Limit visits to one parent plus their child
- Have alcohol gel within easy reach for patients to use on arrival and encourage them to clean their hands and those of their children
- Establish a perimeter around the front desk area so family members know how far away to stand when talking to those at the desk. Tape on the floor is an easy way to define the distances for family members.
- If you can divide your waiting room into a well child space and sick child space, now is the time to do so. If not then consider having your day divided so that well child care is at a different time block than sick child care.
- Consider designating some rooms in your clinic for well child care and others for sick care to further limit exposures.
- If possible limit the number of individuals waiting in the waiting room and create seating that is at least 6 feet apart. Have the staff give each family a wipe to clean the space in which they sit at the time of arrival. Do not put wipes in the waiting area unless you have a way of policing their use as sadly in many settings people are over using them or taking too many.
- Space out visits to further reduce the simultaneous number of patients in the office at one time.
- No play toys or books in the waiting area for now as that creates just one more item that requires cleaning on arrival.
- When patients are called to the back, request they clean their hands when called.
- Limit the wait time in the waiting area and room patients as quickly as possible.
- Use your telephones rather than walking into the patient room to get history and give advice. The shorter amount of time you spend in front of a patient, the lower your risk of giving or getting COVID-19. Have staff get the cellphone number of an adult in the room and then speak to the

patient on the phone after they are roomed. Go in for the examination and then exit for giving information to the family.

Stress and anxiety have risen considerably for us all. How do we help families manage the mental stress and anxiety associated with COVID-19?

- Keeping kids busy will lower their stress and that of their parents. One neighbor drew up a map of the neighborhood (using Google Maps) with all the houses and marked houses where neighbors agreed to put a bear in the window (Pooh Bears, pandas, teddies and koalas, etc.). Young kids and parents then went “bear hunting” for the windows. Families and their kids went for walks and got good exercise. This also helped people feel connected without any neighbor getting within six feet of any other neighbor.
- Use Zoom (<https://zoom.us/docs/en-us/covid19.html>) to build a friend group to have virtual visits. Zoom is available for now free of charge!
- Mindfulness is another way to reduce stress. Consider these sites and apps:
  - <https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/top-meditation-iphone-android-apps>
  - <https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/mindfulness-for-children-kids-activities/>
  - <https://gozen.com/>
  - <http://leftbrainbuddha.com/resources-for-teaching-mindfulness-to-your-children/>
  - Adolescents present a different challenge and here are some websites to help them cope:
    - <https://www.anxietycanada.com/learn-about-anxiety/anxiety-in-youth/>
    - <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-teenagers-can-protect-their-mental-health-during-coronavirus-covid-19>
    - <https://iocdf.org/covid19/talking-to-kids-about-covid-19/>
  - Resource lists for mental health for kids and adults:

Name	Source & Link
“Coping with Stress”	US Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC): <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/copingwith-stresstips.html">https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/copingwith-stresstips.html</a>
“Mental Health and Coping During COVID- 19”	US Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC): <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/coping.html">https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/coping.html</a>
“Taking Care of your Emotional Health”	US Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC): <a href="https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/selfcare.asp">https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/selfcare.asp</a>
“Helping Children Cope with Emergencies”	US Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC): <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/helping-children-cope.html">https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/helping-children-cope.html</a>
RedBook Online COVID-19 Outbreak page	American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP): <a href="https://redbook.solutions.aap.org/ss/rbo_outbreaks_page_3.aspx">https://redbook.solutions.aap.org/ss/rbo_outbreaks_page_3.aspx</a>
Q&A on coronaviruses	World Health Organization (WHO): <a href="https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses">https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses</a>

<p><b>Coronavirus &amp; Mental Health: Taking Care of Ourselves During Infectious Disease Outbreaks</b></p>	<p>American Psychiatric Association (APA): <a href="https://www.psychiatry.org/news-room/apa-blogs/apa-blog/2020/02/coronavirus-and-mental-health-taking-care-of-ourselves-during-infectious-disease-outbreaks">https://www.psychiatry.org/news-room/apa-blogs/apa-blog/2020/02/coronavirus-and-mental-health-taking-care-of-ourselves-during-infectious-disease-outbreaks</a></p>
<p><b>Coronavirus &amp; Emerging Infectious Disease Outbreaks Response</b></p>	<p>Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (CSTS): <a href="https://www.cstsonline.org/resources/resource-master-list/coronavirus-and-emerging-infectious-disease-outbreaks-response">https://www.cstsonline.org/resources/resource-master-list/coronavirus-and-emerging-infectious-disease-outbreaks-response</a></p>
<p><b>Taking Care of your Family during Coronavirus Fact Sheet</b></p>	<p>Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (CSTS): <a href="https://www.cstsonline.org/assets/media/documents/CSTS_FS_Corona_Taking_Care_of_Your_Family.pdf.pdf">https://www.cstsonline.org/assets/media/documents/CSTS_FS_Corona_Taking_Care_of_Your_Family.pdf.pdf</a></p>
<p><b>Research Information Pandemics</b></p>	<p>American Psychological Association: <a href="https://www.apa.org/practice/programs/dmhi/research-information/pandemics">https://www.apa.org/practice/programs/dmhi/research-information/pandemics</a></p>
<p><b>Five ways to view coverage of the Coronavirus</b></p>	<p>American Psychological Association: <a href="https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/pandemics">https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/pandemics</a></p>
<p><b>10 tips for talking about COVID-19 with your kids</b></p>	<p>PBS: <a href="https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/10-tips-for-talking-about-covid-19-with-your-">https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/10-tips-for-talking-about-covid-19-with-your-</a></p>
<p><b>Guidelines for Adolescent Depression in Primary Care tool-kid (GLAD-PC)</b></p>	<p>Reach Institutue <a href="http://www.glad-pc.org/">http://www.glad-pc.org/</a></p>

<b>Speaking of Psychology: Coronavirus Anxiety</b>	American Psychological Association: <a href="https://www.apa.org/research/action/speaking-of-psychology/coronavirus-anxiety">https://www.apa.org/research/action/speaking-of-psychology/coronavirus-anxiety</a>
<b>Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope with COVID-19</b>	The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: <a href="https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/outbreak_factsheet_1.pdf">https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/outbreak_factsheet_1.pdf</a>
<b>Just for Kids: A Comic Exploring the New Coronavirus</b>	National Public Radio: <a href="https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus">https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus</a>
<b>Talking to Teens &amp; Tweens about Coronavirus</b>	The New York Times: <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/02/well/family/coronavirus-teenagers-anxiety.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/02/well/family/coronavirus-teenagers-anxiety.html</a>