

## **Nutrition Psychological Support Discharge Preparation and Home Care of Children with Covid**

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### **Introduction**

Children, although less directly affected by the virus, are paying a heavy price through the indirect effects of the crisis, including:

- Inadequate nutrition with a risk of both overweight and underweight.
- Addiction to screens.
- Lack of schooling.
- Mental health impact.
- Social isolation.
- Risk of child abuse.

### **Nutrition**

- On home isolation/mild disease.
- Infant.
- Exclusive breast feed for 6 months and continue on breastfeeding at least 2 years old.
- From 6 months: provide food from at least four food groups, including grains, pulses, fruits and vegetables, milk products, and nuts.
- Evidence indicates that diet rich in vitamins and trace elements (zinc, copper, selenium and iron) supports the immune system and reduces the risk of infections.

### Fresh and unprocessed food

Fruit, vegetables, nuts, whole grains such as unprocessed maize, millet, oats, wheat, brown rice and roots such as potatoes and foods from animal sources (e.g. meat, fish, eggs and milk).

#### Fruit

- Toddlers between 2 and 3 years (1 cup per day).
- Between 4 and 13 (1.5 cups per day).
- Adolescents (1.5 to 2 cups per day).

#### Raw or cooked vegetables

- Toddlers between 2 and 3 (1 cup).
- Between 4 and 8 (1.5 cups).
- Between 9 and 13 (2 to 2.5 cups).
- Between 14 and 18 (2.5 to 3 cups).
- Vegetable consumption should include leafy greens, brightly colored red, yellow and orange vegetables and legumes.

#### Protein

- Serve 2 - 3 portions per day (3 for a vegetarian toddler).
- Fish, nuts, milk, curd, egg etc.

#### Fruit juice and dried fruit

- 100% fresh fruit juice, not a juice drink with added sugar.
- Half a cup of dried fruit is equivalent to a whole cup of regular fruit.

#### Snacks

- Raw vegetables and fresh fruit.
- Vegetables should not be over cooked.

#### Water

- 8 - 10 cups of water every day.
- Fruit and vegetables that contain water (e.g. cucumber, tomatoes, spinach, mushroom, melon, broccoli, oranges, apples, blueberries).

- Avoid giving sweetened fruit juices, syrups, fruit juice concentrates as they all contain sugar.

### Fats

- Unsaturated fats (fish, avocado, nuts, olive oil, sunflower and corn oils) rather than saturated fats (found in fatty meat, butter, coconut oil, cream, cheese, and ghee).
- Do not give processed meats because they are high in fat and salt.

### Salt and sugar intake:

- Limit the amount of salt while cooking - less than 5g.
- Do not give snacks that is high in salt and sugar.
- Do not give soft drinks or sodas and other drinks that are high in sugar.

Cook at home.

### Hospitalized children

- If child has distress start IV fluids.
- Confirm NG tube placement and NG aspiration Q4h if on NPO.
- Assess bowel sounds.
- Administer proton pump inhibitors.
- Calorie: 120 kcal/kg body weight.
- Proteins: 1 to 2 g/kg/day.
- Calcium: 400 mg/day.
- Iron: 10 g/day.
- Fluid requirement:
  - 3.5 to 10 kg - 100 ml/kg/day.
  - 11 to 20 kg - 1000 ml +50 ml/kg for every kg.
  - > 20 kg - 1500 ml+20 ml/kg for every kg.

### Psychological support for children and family



*Figure 1*

#### Reactions of children with Covid

Some children may exhibit the following signs:

- Difficulties in sleeping and eating.
- Nightmares, being withdrawn or aggressive.
- Complain of abdominal pain or headache without physical reason.
- Fears, afraid of being alone.
- Clinging, depending behaviors.
- Fear of dark.
- Lack of interest in playing.
- Sad/cry more than usual for no apparent reason.

These children need specialized help from trained professionals.



**Figure 2**

### **Understanding the emotional needs of the children**

1. Caregivers need to be patient with children and understand their emotions.
2. All emotions are valid emotions, and caregivers should understand them with empathy.
3. Engage children in creative interactive activity, such as playing and drawing
4. Help children find positive ways to express disturbing feelings such as anger, fear and sadness
5. Keep regular routines and schedules as much as possible.
6. Avoid watching, reading, listening or discussing too much news about the COVID-19 and persuade children to divert their attention to other topics as well.
7. Need special counselling if someone is sick in the family or if there has been a death since it will add anxiety.

### **Helping children deal with stressful situations**

- Listen: Give children opportunities to talk about what they are feeling. Encourage them to share concerns and ask questions.

- Comfort: Use simple tools to comfort and calm children, for e.g. telling stories, singing with them and playing games. Praise them frequently for their strengths, such as showing courage, compassion and helpfulness.

Reassure children that they are prepared to keep them safe. Provide them with correct information through valid sources.



Figure 3

### How to talk to the child

Ask questions at the child’s developmental level:

- Be honest.
- Focus on helping the child feel safe, but be truthful.
- If child asks about something and we don’t know the answer, say ‘No’.
- Speak calmly and reassuringly.
- Give time to share their fears.
- Know when they need guidance.
- Talk about all the things that are happening to keep people safe and healthy.
- Kids and teens often worry more about family and friends than themselves and let the child know that it’s normal to feel stressed out at times.

### Talking to children about rumors related to COVID-19

The following information is NOT TRUE:

1. The virus attacks only old people and children and spares young people.

2. The virus is transmitted through pets and people should abandon their pets.
3. The use of mouthwash, antibiotics, cigarettes, and liquor with high alcohol can kill COVID-19.
4. Going for a steam bath, outside in the sun can prevent you from getting infected with corona virus
5. All food items are contaminated and will spread the corona virus.
6. There is no need to worry as Indians have higher immunity and are exposed to many diseases than people in the western countries.
7. Corona virus does not survive in warm/hot weather.

### Home care



Figure 4

### Role as parent or caregiver

- To promote an environment where children can grow up and develop their full potential having fun and being safe and healthy.
- To facilitate a space where children are listened to, they can express their thoughts and feelings.
- To understand the implications of the pandemic on the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of children, including the increased risk of violence and abuse.
- To provide resources for caregivers to help engage with children positively and effectively.

### How to help your child recover at home

- Caring for a sick child at home will be the same whether or not your child has tested positive for COVID-19.
- Provide adequate rest and stay hydrated.

- Wash hands often with soap and warm water, for at least 20 seconds.
- Separate the ill child from the rest of the family to prevent spreading the illness to others. If it's not possible, the sick child should wear a face mask.
- Cover all coughs and sneezes.
- Avoid sharing dishes, cups, towels and bedding,
- If possible, have sick child to use a different bathroom from others.

### Keep environment clean

- Follow instructions for the safe use and disposal of face masks and other contaminated items as advised by the Public Health Authority.
- Wash contaminated laundry with regular laundry soap and hot water (60 - 90°C), and dry well.
- Wear gloves and non-medical mask made with at least two layers and completely cover the nose and mouth while handling contaminated laundry.
- Clean and disinfect all high-touch surfaces thoroughly everyday (doorknobs, light switches, toys, remote controls, phones, etc.) with a diluted bleach.

The following are recommended for discharge and post discharge care of children who have suffered severe COVID-19:

1. Pulse oximeter.
2. Teach on warning signs (fever, persistent drop in oxygen saturation, increased cough or breathlessness, chest pain, headache jaw pain/tooth pain/nasal blockage).
3. Home oxygen therapy and emergency contact number in case of exhaustion of oxygen supply or malfunction of concentrator.
4. Emergency contact number in case of warning signs.
5. Influenza and pneumococcal vaccination.

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