

Psychosocial Challenges Affecting Pediatric Kidney Transplant Recipients



Mental Health Factors

- Difficulty sleeping
- Depression and/or Anger
- Substance use
- Anxiety about appearance :
 - * Body image
 - * Looking different than peers
 - * Growth concerns
- Increased screen time
- Decreased physical activity
- Uncertainty about the future
 - * School changes
 - * Sports
 - * Friendships
- Fear of admission to the hospital
- Fear of contracting COVID-19, becoming ill, dying from the disease

Tips for addressing these factors

- Seek counseling to develop coping skills and work on depression or anger
- Seek medical care if you/someone you know has suicidal or homicidal thoughts or problems with drugs/alcohol
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends children and adolescents should be physically active for at least 1 hour per day
- Stick to a structured schedule/routine and make sleep hygiene (healthy sleep habits) a priority
- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) screen time recommendations:
 - * 2-5 years old: no more than 1 hour of screen time per day
 - * Older than 5 years old: no more than 2 hours per day (may need to make modifications or exceptions when doing virtual school)

Social Factors

- Difficulty making friends
- Feeling different from other children, unable to keep up with others or unable to do the same things as others do
- Being teased by others
- Inability to socialize with others due to social distancing recommendations
- Family stressors related to increased amount of time spent with parents and/or siblings which can lead to frustration

Tips for addressing these factors

- Seek out peer support groups for children with transplants or chronic illnesses
- Continue to socialize with friends or peer groups either by phone or video chat
- Connect with peers through sports or other outdoor activities to maintain social distance
- Try to be patient with family members and plan to take breaks from each other

School Factors

- Difficulty paying attention in school
- Feeling forgetful
- Missing school because of appointments or hospital admissions
- Difficulty keeping up with schoolwork
- Missing school due to fear of contracting COVID-19 or feeling ill

Tips for addressing these factors

- Parents should work with the school to develop a 504 or IEP to assure that child has plans in place to catch up when needed
- Structure school time to prioritize work so that in the event of illness or hospitalization, the child won't get too far behind