

Common Childhood Disorders and Diseases

Anxiety

- What is it?
 - A state of fear or distress
 - May be triggered by specific situations (for example, a new social setting, specific fears, fights with friends or family members) or occur without a specific trigger.
 - Becomes a concern if it lasts for more than two months or disrupts the child's daily life.
- Common Symptoms
 - Withdrawal from activities and people
 - Sweating, fast heartbeat, stomach aches, headaches
 - Crying, bad temper, or moodiness
 - Trouble sleeping
 - Poor appetite
 - Repetitive behaviour
- Working Strategies
 - Validate the child's feelings and avoid minimizing his concerns
 - Support, comfort, and encourage the child
 - Listen to and talk with the child about his feelings
- More Information
 - <http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/En/HealthAZ/ConditionsandDiseases/BehaviouralandEmotionalProblems/Pages/Anxiety.aspx>

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

- What is it?
 - Hyperactivity, impulsivity, and/or inattention that interferes with daily tasks
 - Often comorbid with anxiety disorders, depression, oppositional defiant disorder, and some learning disabilities
- Common Symptoms
 - Difficulty paying attention to a task for more than a few minutes
 - Difficulty following instructions
 - Difficulty playing quietly, or sitting in her seat
 - Difficulty organizing tasks and activities
 - Have trouble keeping track of personal items; forgetfulness
 - Interrupting others and difficulty waiting for her turn
 - Hyperactivity symptoms may subside in teenagers with ADHD, but inattentive symptoms may remain
- Working Strategies
 - Create consistent schedules for bedtime and morning routines

- Provide a schedule and outline how each day will look; have the schedule visible and accessible to the child
- Outline rules that need to be followed and consequences for misbehaving; rules and consequences should be simple, specific, and consistent
- Give positive reminders about appropriate behaviour (For example, “Speak quietly inside” instead of “No yelling inside”)
- Recognize good behaviour; give positive feedback when the child is behaving well
- More Information
 - <http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/En/ResourceCentres/ADHD/AboutADHD/Pages/default.aspx>

Autism Spectrum Disorder

- What is it?
 - A life-long developmental disability that prevents the child from understanding what he sees and hears.
 - Affects the child’s ability to understand social relationships, communication, and behaviour
 - Restricted, repetitive, and stereotypic patterns of behaviour, interests, and activities.
 - Every child with Autism has a unique combination of characteristics associated with the disorder.
- Common Symptoms
 - May be a range of difficulties in expressive and receptive language skills; may not develop functional speech
 - Often have difficulty comprehending verbal information, following long verbal instructions, and remembering a sequence of instructions
 - Difficulty adapting to a new schedule or new environment; often find changes in activity, setting, or planned routine very stressful
 - May have some level of intellectual disability ranging from mild to severe
 - Some individuals with Autism are very withdrawn, while others may be overly active and approach people in peculiar ways
 - Often have difficulty establishing relationships
 - May be unable to understand the perspective of others, or that other’s perspective can be different from their own
 - Have a tendency to play with toys and objects in unusual and stereotypical ways
 - Preoccupation with one specific interest or object; repetitive motor mannerisms
 - Fascination with movement, such as the spinning of a fan
- Working Strategies
 - Provide opportunities for choice; choice should be limited to one or two preferred activities
 - Break down oral instructions into small, specific steps and include visual representations
 - Use concrete examples when explaining a task and offer hands-on activities
 - Provide time and space to relax where the child can engage in repetitive behaviours, rocking, and/or other self-soothing behaviours
 - Prepare for transitions between activities by giving time warnings (For example, we have 10 minutes left at the lake, we have 5 minutes left at the lake, we have to leave the lake now and go to our cabin)

- Provide the child with their schedule for their time at camp. Go over it with them each day, and tell the child of any changes to their schedule as advanced as possible. Have the schedule visible and accessible to the child.
- Create individualized mini-schedules (For example, bedtime routine: put on your P.J.'s, brush your teeth, etc.)
- Provide specific, positive feedback while the child is engaged in an activity. Carefully word feedback so that it is behaviour-specific
- More Information
 - <http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/En/HealthAZ/ConditionsandDiseases/BehaviouralandEmotionalProblems/Pages/Autism-Spectrum-Disorder.aspx>
 - <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/docs/autism.pdf>

Depression

- What is it?
 - Depression is a state of hopelessness or despair that lasts longer than two weeks. Depression is more commonly seen in teenagers and adults than in young children.
- Common Symptoms
 - Social isolation, poor communication
 - Change in sleep patterns (sleeping significantly more than usual or significantly less than usual)
 - Change in appetite (either increased eating, or loss of appetite)
 - Loss of interest in activities that the individual used to be interested in
 - Loss of energy and motivation to complete daily tasks, go to school, or get out of bed
 - Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
 - Irritable mood, consistent feelings of sadness or emptiness
 - Low self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt
- Working Strategies
 - Validate the child's feelings and avoid minimizing his concerns
 - Support and comfort the child
 - Listen to and talk with the child about his feelings
 - Encourage the child to take part in activities he enjoys
 - Contact the medical staff if you suspect that child or teenager may have depression
- More Information
 - <http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/En/HealthAZ/ConditionsandDiseases/BehaviouralandEmotionalProblems/Pages/Depression.aspx>
 - <http://www.mental-health-today.com/dep/dsm.htm>

Down Syndrome

- What is it?
 - Down Syndrome is a genetic condition that occurs when a child is born with 47 chromosomes instead of 46 chromosomes. Symptoms vary for each child from mild to severe.
- Common Symptoms
 - Abnormal mental and physical development
 - Physical symptoms include decreased muscle tone and facial characteristics
 - Health complications may include eye problems, hearing problems, recurrent ear infections, sleep apnea (stop breathing while sleeping), heart defects, higher susceptibility infections

- Working Strategies
 - Find out as much information as possible about the child's developmental level, strengths, likes, and dislikes
 - Keep instructions simple and brief. Have the child repeat instructions if possible
 - Set clear boundaries and rules. Be simple and brief in explaining consequences for breaking rules and ensure that these are followed consistently
- More Information
 - <http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/En/HealthAZ/ConditionsandDiseases/GeneticDisorders/Pages/DownSyndrome.aspx>

Eating Disorders

- What is it?
 - Bulimia and Anorexia Nervosa are the two main types of eating disorders. Though eating disorders are most commonly seen in females, males can also have an eating disorder.
 - Bulimia is characterised by a cycle of bingeing (eating large quantities of food) and purging (dispelling the eaten food by vomiting or taking laxatives)
 - Anorexia Nervosa is characterised by deliberately keeping low weight. In children and adolescents this is measured by being below 85% of the expected weight for height
- Common Symptoms of Anorexia
 - An intense fear of being overweight even if the individual is underweight
 - A distorted view of one's body
 - May try to hid their low weight by wearing baggy clothing
 - Physical symptoms can include low blood pressure, fainting, difficulty sleeping, and lack of menstruation in females
- Working Strategies
 - If you suspect that a child or teenager may have an eating disorder consult the medical staff.
 - If a child or teens talks to you about having an eating disorder following the active listening skills found in Strategies for Working with Children. Listen without judgment. Do not give the individual a false impression that you will keep this secret. Let the individual know that you are concerned for their safety and that you will need to talk to the medical staff.
- More Information
 - <http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/En/News/DrPat/Pages/How-can-I-tell-if-my-daughter-has-an-eating-disorder.aspx>

Epilepsy

- What is it?
 - Epilepsy is diagnosed when a child has two or more unprovoked seizures. Seizures are caused by a sudden electrical disturbance in the brain. Seizures can take different forms.
- Common Symptoms
 - The child may look like she is daydreaming
 - The child may hear a sound that is not there
 - The child may have a sudden twitch or jerking of her facial muscles or of one or more limbs
 - The child may fall to the floor and convulse

- During a seizure the child can either lose consciousness or be aware of her surroundings
- Working Strategies: What to do when a child has a seizure
 - Move any potentially dangerous objects away from the child
 - Roll the child onto her side
 - Try to make the child more comfortable
 - Stay calm and send for help from the medical staff
- More Information
 - <http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/En/HealthAZ/ConditionsandDiseases/BrainandNervousSystemDisorders/Pages/Epilepsy-Overview.aspx>
 - <http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/En/HealthAZ/TestsAndTreatments/How-To-Videos/Pages/Seizure-Video-What-to-do-if-your-Child-has-a-Seizure.aspx>

Siblings' Experiences

- Childhood sickness can have long-lasting effects on all members of a family. The following are commonly seen reactions of siblings of sick children:
 - Concern for the sick sibling
 - Fear of sickness or death
 - Jealousy of the attention the sick sibling is receiving
 - Guilt that their sibling is sick and they are healthy
 - Abandonment by parents when their sibling is receiving all of their attention
 - Sadness
 - Anger
 - Worrying about what happens at the Hospital
 - Concern about parents
- More Information
 - Reactions to Sickness at developmental stages: <http://www.cancer.org/Treatment/ChildrenandCancer/WhenYourChildHasCancer/ChildrenDiagnosedwithCancerDealingwithDiagnosis/children-diagnosed-with-cancer-dealing-with-diagnosis-how-children-react>

Fact Sheet on Siblings' Experiences:

http://www.onconurse.com/factsheets/sibling_of_children_w_cancer.pdf