

# Effect of COVID-19 on children behaviour

COVID-19 affects all of us, no matter how old we are. Like with everyone, not every child reacts the same way. Some children might not be very concerned, whereas others develop unpleasant feelings. Like adults, children also have different personalities and levels of resilience, which affects their wellbeing.

Some children might develop higher levels of stress, feeling restless or grumpy. Some might develop anxiety and become irritable, aggressive, or scared. Depending on how long the situation lasts, feelings of sadness or depression could appear which could lead to social withdrawal or crying. All these feelings can also display in physical reactions including stomach-aches, headaches, or loss of appetite.

The lack of routine is probably one of the biggest factors that affect children. Routines (e.g. getting up at 6.30 am, kindergarten/school from 8 am to 3 pm, meeting friends, having dinner, going to bed at 8 pm) give children structure and a framework they can rely on, which is very important. Routine and structure give them a feeling of safety and comfort.

Another big thing is the loss of social contact. Imagine how children miss their grandparents, playmates, and friends. Younger children are not even capable of getting in contact with their friends/grandparents by themselves. To accept the recommended and necessary barriers is difficult for us adults and probably much more difficult for our little ones.

The fact that many parents have to do home office now is also not easy for children to accept and understand, especially for the younger ones: "My mom/dad is at home and has no time for me?" Just keep in mind that this situation, as difficult as it is for you, is also difficult, new, and unexpected for children.

Finally, the impact of media can have a negative effect on children, just as it might have on you. The continuous stream of reports and pictures of people who are getting sick and even dying that children are seeing on TV, the radio, and social media can lead to fear and anxiety.

Fortunately, people, including children, are very flexible and adaptable beings. Still, the longer children are not allowed to have direct contact with their friends and grandparents, the more they will miss them. Staying at home for a long time can be tough, feelings of isolation and fear could appear. Cabin fever could arise when the whole family is together 24/7 for many weeks. This can lead to conflicts within the family which also can frighten children.