

COVID-19 and Young Children: Recommendations vs Reality

How to Stay Sane and Healthy: Questions and Answers with a PEIP Registered Nurse

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Unfortunately, COVID-19 is not going away anytime soon, and just because businesses are open doesn't mean that the risks are really any less. However, many are feeling a need to resume a more normal pace of life.

Social distancing can be extremely difficult, mentally and emotionally, on both children and parents. As a parent of an active, social 2-year-old, I totally understand how trying this time can be. However, there are ways to keep your sanity and remain within the CDC guidelines to curb the spread of this deadly virus. I wanted to share two common scenarios that can be COVID free, but also meet a young family's social/emotional needs.

Question: Are playdates okay? It is hard to tell my child he cannot play with the neighbors when he used to all the time.

Answer: Frankly, the more people you interact with, the more likely you are to catch and spread COVID. Since young children often put their hands in their mouth and lick shared toys/objects, they

are at greater risk of catching the virus than older children.

It is also unrealistic to expect your baby/toddler to not come in close contact during a playdate with the other children/adults involved. Although outdoor activities are lower risk than indoor, PEIP aged kids are at higher risk due to an inability to keep the germ sharing to a minimum.

Instead of an in-person playdate, consider virtual playdates where kids can talk and interact.

This can still meet some interaction needs of

young children, but greatly reduces the risks. Experts have weighed in on the matter and virtual playdates are effective in maintaining social bonds.

Play is important in child development, but playdates are not the only option. Take this opportunity to slow down

some and play directly with your child more. Uninterrupted "Mommy and Me" or "Daddy and Me" time can be just as valuable. Put down your phone or computer for an hour. Be free of distractions and just play!

Sources:

<https://abc13.com/social-distancing-playdates-playdate-virtual/6035842/>

<https://www.metroparent.com/daily/parenting/parenting-issues-tips/playdates-necessary-child-development-expert-weighs/>



COVID and Young Children (continued)

Question: I run out of things to do at home and I don't want my toddler in front of a screen all the time. What can I do?

Answer: There is research that shows more than two hours of screen time a day can be damaging to normal child development. However, there are healthy and unhealthy ways to experience screen time even during a pandemic.



First, make sure screen time is interactive. Whenever possible, make it a social experience. Have the whole family watch a movie together vs. having everyone on separate devices. Plan a family movie night several times a week and rotate who chooses the show. Be purposeful in the entertainment you pick. Pick shows that educate vs. those that may model unhealthy behaviors. Be aware of what your child is viewing. Have limits

on screen time (although this limit may be more lenient than your pre-COVID limit).

Other options include spending time outside as much as possible. Go on hikes and bike rides. Make homemade playdough or slime. Have a picnic. Go on a Sunday drive and explore nature. Dance in the rain and puddle jump! Plan a craft. Have a dance party! Keep a running list of activities you can pull from when the boredom sets in, so you do not revert to screens too often.

Source:

<https://childmind.org/article/screen-time-during-the-coronavirus-crisis/>