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COPING UP WITH POST PANDEMIC BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES IN CHILDREN

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When the Covid 19 Pandemic and consequentially lockdown prevailed over the world in 2020, it led to school closures, disrupted routines, increased stress, and less opportunity for physical activity and lack of proper nutrition; causing multiple behavior issues in children and adolescents.

To enumerate some of the behavioral problems in children in Pandemic and Post Pandemic times - conduct problems, peer interaction problems, hyperactivity-inattention, academic backwardness, screen addiction, behavior issues, feeding issues – obesity. This article encompasses 3 behavioral issues in children in Pandemic and post Pandemic times.

A. Post Pandemic Obesity in Children

As per WHO, obesity is defined as abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that presents a risk to health, a body mass index (BMI) over 25 is considered overweight, and over 30 is obese.

Worldwide obesity in children during Pandemic and Post pandemic times has increased; probably because of - less opportunity for physical activity, increased sedentary time, frequent snacking, 24 by 7 screens, and food as reward, food as stress-buster and preferred food was junk food.

Obesity in children – if not dealt in time – can be next pandemic. To tackle this obesity in children, what parents can do:

- Diet Planning-following My plate
- Limiting Junk food High Fiber diet
- Plenty fluids
- Exercise as family ritual
- Limiting Screen time
- Motivation on part of child and parents



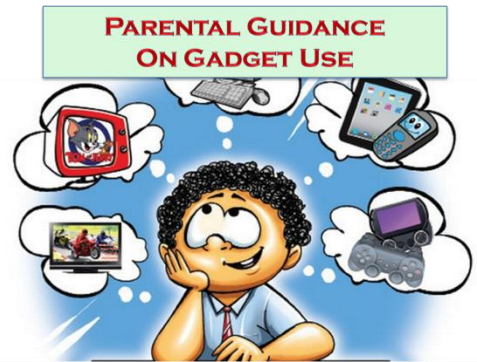
B. Post Pandemic Screen Addiction in Children

Types of screen / internet addiction: Information overload-online surfing compulsions-gambling, shopping, computer addiction: pre-programmed games, cyber relationship addiction: chat rooms, social networking. Consequences of screen addiction can be -

inattention, depression, aggression, self-harm, poor academic performance, memory disturbances.

What parents can do:

- Know the tools, risks, and rules for internet use for their children
- Set up the internet for safe use
- Use online protection tools
- Understand games and apps
- Learn about social networks
- Understand about online violence
- Trust their children, invest time in them, monitor and educate the kids about cyber safety
- Do consult Developmental pediatrician, Psychologists at early stage; so that child could be helped with various therapies like behavior modification, Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT)-Time management, improve coping and communication, mindfulness activities and group therapy.



C. Post pandemic Academic Issues

Child education is badly hit due to Pandemic! In spite of attempts to continue education by online means, children have lost the academic connect, which in turn is presenting with different issues like - reduced study time, poor mental math, handwriting issues, inattention & hyperactivity, communication issues, lower creativity.

What parents can do:

- Ensure a Healthy Mix of Screen and Physical Activity
- Screen activities shouldn't be lumped together.
- Some screen activities are educational; but some are just



for fun. Be vigilant and replace screen based fun time with family based fun time

- Parent as 'Teacher'. With the help of school and teachers, parents can designate certain time for one to one teaching for their own child.
- Presently focus more on 'Concept learning' rather than 'Just completion of assignments!'



For all behavioral issues that may erupt with Covid 19 Pandemic, Primary Focus should be on Prevention. Some such preventive strategies for parents could be

- Be physically active - Exercise, play is mandatory!
- Build up values of cyber hygiene and safety in the foundation years
- Start with change, one parent at a time
- Talk early, Talk Often
- Give children the gift of human interaction
- Take care of yourself. Children are watching you!