

Physical and Emotional Health Issues Common with Foster Kids

Outline

- Use the term “health” broadly to encompass physical, emotional, mental, behavioral, developmental, educational, and oral health.
- Children who come into your home from foster care often come with complex and serious physical, mental health, developmental, and psychosocial problems rooted in childhood adversity and trauma. Impact of trauma on kids physical and mental health.
- Those areas of the brain most affected by trauma, especially early trauma, are those involved in stress response, emotional regulation, attention, cognition, executive function, and memory. Thus, childhood trauma, adversity, and toxic stress are correlated with poor emotional regulation, aggression, hyperactivity, inattention, impulsivity, and dissociation between thought and emotion.
- An issue with foster care parenting is limited access to health care before entering foster care and lack of knowledge about previous health care. How does this impact care and what can foster or adoptive parents do?
- The role of transience and uncertainty for kids in foster care provides challenges for foster parents and doctors in providing health care to kids in foster care.
- Immunizations
- Medicaid Care management
- Foster kids often come to us with a bag full of medications that have been prescribed somewhere along the line and a host of diagnoses. What role can foster or soon to be adoptive parents play?
- Psychotropic medications are commonly prescribed for children in foster care. Although this may have improved lately, research has found that children in foster care are prescribed psychotropic medications at a rate 3 times that of other Medicaid-enrolled children and they often are taking multiple medications at once. Once psychotropic medications are prescribed, children in foster care are likely to be kept on them longer than other Medicaid-enrolled children who are not in foster care.
- What are psychotropic drugs and why are so many foster children on them?
- What can foster parents do if they question the amount or type of medication their foster child is taking or even the underlying diagnosis?
- What role does a foster parent have in seeking a change in medication for their foster child?
- What doctor do you take your foster child to? Your pediatrician? Their previous doctor, if they had one? The doctor that has prescribed the medication?
- Pre-natal exposure to alcohol and drugs: impact, diagnosis.
- One of the most confusing aspects of caring for a child in foster care is identifying who has the authority to consent for health care on behalf of the child or adolescent. Varies by state (caseworker can tell you).
- Sleep issues with foster children. What causes sleep issues? What can foster parents or parents adopting from foster care do to help children in foster care sleep better?

- How common are weight issues in foster children? Why is obesity and being overweight an issue? What can foster parents or parents adopting from foster care do?
- Dental care for foster children. How much and how soon?
- Coping with feelings of “why bother” when a foster child will return to the same chaotic household they came from.
- Tell us about NC Pediatric Society and their Fostering Health NC Program.