



ECHO

Environmental influences
on Child Health Outcomes

A program supported by the NIH

Study Summary

Youth Well-being During COVID-19

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Who sponsored this study?

This research was supported by the Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes (ECHO) program, Office of The Director, National Institutes of Health, with co-funding from the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR).

Footnote: The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.

Why was this study needed?

Families have faced many challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, but we don't yet know much about how these challenges have impacted children's mental health. While negative mental health outcomes are important to research, it is just as important to understand what helps children maintain positive mental health during hard times. This study investigated how the impact of COVID-19 pandemic-related family hardships have affected child and adolescent well-being and identified factors that can improve and protect their well-being during difficult times.

Who was involved?

This study surveyed 977 caregivers of children ages two to 12 from 11 ECHO cohorts and 669 adolescents ages 11-17 and their caregivers from 5 ECHO cohorts. These participants came from 30 US states.

What happened during the study?

The researchers collected survey data from May 2020 to May 2021. These surveys asked each participant about their family's COVID-19 pandemic experience. The researchers combined data from the different cohorts to look at how pandemic-related sources of stress (also called "hardships") were related to caregiver and child stress, and how stress, social connection, family engagement, and pre-existing mental health conditions related to children's life satisfaction.

What were the study results?

Families with more COVID-19 pandemic-related hardships had higher levels of caregiver and child stress and lower child life satisfaction. Children who had higher levels of social connection and family engagement had better life satisfaction. For younger children, family engagement also decreased the negative effect of stress on life satisfaction. For adolescents, having anxiety and/or depression was a risk factor associated with lower life satisfaction during the pandemic.

Footnote: Results reported here are for a single study. Other or future studies may provide new information or different results. You should not make changes to your health without first consulting your healthcare professional.

Impact

This study demonstrated the different ways caregivers, children, and adolescents have coped with stress and adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of this study highlight the importance of family engagement and peer social connection in promoting children's well-being during adverse events. This study also showed that stress and well-being are not direct opposites, suggesting the need for interventions that can both decrease children's stress and improve their well-being.

What happens next?

The next steps for this research include looking at which specific COVID-19 family hardships have the most impact on caregiver and child stress and well-being so that we can design more specific interventions.

Where can I learn more?

[Access the full journal article](#), titled "Youth well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic" in *Pediatrics*.

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