

# Chronic Medical Conditions

## What is Pediatric Psychology?



Many children and adolescents will experience medical illnesses and conditions throughout their lifetime. However, kids who have chronic medical conditions face a unique set of challenges that may put them at risk for several mental health issues. Pediatric psychology is a subspecialty area of clinical psychology and is dedicated to applying evidenced-based psychological

interventions within the context of health and medical care to help children and families adjust to the psychosocial aspects of both chronic and acute illnesses. Pediatric psychologists receive specialized training in a variety of medical settings and are distinctively qualified to evaluate and treat cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and environmental factors that impact health and recovery from illness or injury. Pediatric psychologists are also qualified to treat general mental health and behavioral issues that are unrelated to a medical issue.

## How can pediatric psychologists help?

Pediatric psychology interventions can help your child:

- ✓ Optimize coping and adjustment to acute and chronic medical conditions
- ✓ Learn skills to manage stress, anxiety, and depression that may be contributing to and/or exacerbating chronic health concerns
- ✓ Master relaxation strategies that can help reduce pain associated with many medical conditions/procedures
- ✓ Increase adherence to prescribed treatment regimens
- ✓ Improve other health-related behaviors, such as sleep, exercise, and diet
- ✓ Develop age-appropriate independence and adherence to medical care during transition to adolescence and adulthood
- ✓ Decrease anxiety related to medical appointments and procedures
- ✓ Maximize function across home, school, and work environments
- ✓ Improve family communication and reduce conflict regarding medical care

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## What diagnoses can be treated?

Asthma & related respiratory problems	Brain or spinal cord injury	Cancer	Chronic Pain
Cystic Fibrosis	Developmental Disabilities	Diabetes	Epilepsy & other neurological disorders
Gastrointestinal Disorders	Blood Disorders (e.g., Sickle Cell)	Orthopedic Issues	Sleep Problems

## When should I consider a referral?

Although the decision to receive consultation and treatment is highly individualized, treatment may be recommended for some of the following reasons:

- Your child is struggling to cope with a new medical diagnosis.
- Underlying or resulting mood and behavioral issues are affecting health and medical care.
- Your child is refusing to engage in medical care or has significant anxiety related to procedures and appointments.
- Your family is experiencing conflict regarding medical management, which is particularly common as children transition into adolescence and adulthood.
- Medical issues are impacting your child's ability to function or participate in routine activities.

## Who do I contact to find out more?

Referrals for pediatric psychology services can be made by your pediatrician, specialty care doctor, mental health professional, or by a family member directly.



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