

Under the influence of the 'Fifth Wave' of COVID-19 infections in Japan



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Introduction

Under the influence of the 'Fifth Wave' of COVID-19 infections in Japan, COVID-19 infections started to spread to schoolchildren, therefore it becomes necessary to pay more attention to children. Moreover, Japanese archipelago is relatively vulnerable to natural disasters. Therefore, it is now also necessary to think about what to do when COVID-19 infections and natural disasters occur at the same time. Although outdoor play can help enhance children's growth, under the influence of voluntary self-isolation to prevent infections, there is a sharp decline in children's outdoor activities such as playing outside or playing in the park. Here, I would like to summarize some of my thoughts about issues related to COVID-19, for example, what to pay attention to and what kind of play can be done when playing outside amid COVID-19 pandemic.

Beware of the spread of COVID-19 infections to schoolchildren

In September 2021, COVID-19 infections started to spread to schoolchildren. Extra precautions become essential for after-school care for children, as well as for after-school children's club activities. Clusters among schoolchildren are occurring in many places of Japan, and the situation is becoming more serious. In places with many schoolchildren,

meals and play activities become concerns. Some cities have even issued notifications that snacks should not be provided basically (For example: Yokohama City). Hand washing and disinfection should be done more frequently. Children need to keep a distance from each other, and silent eating is required in many places. There are a lot of concerns. In addition, in order to create a play environment where children can spend their time safely with peace of mind, while avoiding the three Cs, it is also particularly necessary to separate children who gather in one place. To achieve this, it is essential to secure sufficient staff to pay sufficient attention to children. However, when the working conditions become a bottleneck, the reality is that there is always lack of staff. Considering this reality, I can feel that it has become more difficult to offer support to children when the problems of tight space and labor shortage are becoming more and more apparent during COVID-19 Crisis.

Even amid COVID-19 pandemic, nursery schools are generally open for schoolchildren. However, when there are reports saying that cluster infections are occurring, children and staff are infected, we can see that it is becoming very difficult to keep operations safe.

Therefore, I think that it is now really necessary to make people who work for children become the priority target group for vaccination. Although it seems that the implementation of the priority vaccination is very limited, I hope that the national and local governments could arrange priority vaccination for staff and instructors who work for schoolchildren as soon as possible.

What to do when a disaster occurs during the spread of COVID-19 infections

In Japan, since there are many natural disasters, in times of disasters, how to evacuate safely and what should be done must be well known and thoroughly understood. Currently, the capacity of the evacuation centers in times of disasters has been drastically reduced in response to COVID-19 prevention measures. Moreover, there are still risks of infections in times of evacuation. Even if you have information about the nearest evacuation center, amid COVID-19 pandemic, to prevent infections, you may not be able to enter the desired evacuation center due to the problems of hygiene management such as accommodation capacity and ventilation conditions.

Therefore, besides evacuation centers, you always have to think about other options by yourself as well. Concerning the place, it is good to choose a place where there are no rivers or steep slopes nearby. If you are in the suburbs with upland or where there is evacuation space in the car, staying in the car is also an option. At that time, try to ensure sufficient ventilation and sufficient exercise, and it is also important to secure food. Furthermore, making use of substantial lodging facilities nearby is also another option.

If you are receiving medical treatment at home for COVID-19 infections, if you have no other ways to evacuate or if you have no other choice when the danger is coming near, even during COVID-19 Crisis, I think that you should not hesitate to go to a nearby evacuation center in times of disasters.

When staying in an evacuation center, special attention should be paid to prevent infections, especially infections through the floor. First of all, it is necessary to avoid close contacts, to thoroughly wash hands and disinfect with alcohol, to wear a mask, and to try to ventilate at least twice an hour. Above all, since the floor of the evacuation center may be contaminated with viruses, it is necessary to make some cardboard partitions to keep a distance from other people, and to spend time on your own bed. It is recommended to eat food such as rice balls (onigiri) or bread without taking out from the bag or package. For garbage disposal, it is recommended to seal the used bag and put it into the shared garbage bag.

Regarding the regular preparation for a large-scale disaster under COVID-19 Crisis, it is recommended to put the following things inside the emergency bag:

Water and food (for 3 days: rice, pre-packaged food, biscuits, chocolate, hardtack), toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste), towels, disposable masks, a thermometer, clothing, rainwear, athletic shoes, infection prevention products (alcohol-based sanitizer), first-aid kits (adhesive plasters, bandages, disinfectants, household medicine), mouthwash (for maintaining a clean oral environment), nail clippers (for preventing infections from fingers), flashlight, a portable radio, spare batteries, a portable battery charger, lighters, matches, candles, slippers (for preventing infections through the floor), disposable body warmers, blankets, work gloves, valuables (cash, passbooks, the driver's license, patient ID cards) etc.

At the evacuation center, I think that people infected with COVID-19 who are receiving medical treatment at home are generally separated from other evacuees in some specially-dedicated space. However, when it is unavoidable that all evacuees stay in the same building, it is better to separate the flow lines, to secure specially-dedicated staircases, passages and space. If you have a fever at the evacuation center, report it to the person in charge immediately.

Children's outdoor play activities under COVID-19 Crisis

Lastly, I will try to summarize five ways to suggest how to promote children's outdoor play activities under COVID-19 Crisis. First of all, my basic concept is that the park, which is a valuable place for children to play outside, is also the lungs of the city for refreshing air.

(1) In the park, it is important to avoid places with a lot of people, and avoid using when it is crowded. Moreover, do not create a crowded state where people gather within 2 meters. In short, ① Do not use if it is crowded; ② Use for a shorter time; ③ Do not occupy the same place all the time (do not create a crowd).

(2) As good manners to use, wear a mask, enforce coughing etiquette, wash hands after going back home, and gargle thoroughly. It is important to put efforts into measures to prevent infections so that you will not transmit to your beloved people.

(3) Please refrain from playing outside and using the park when you are not feeling well, having a cough, sneezing, or having a fever.

(4) I would like to recommend some games which can avoid droplet transmission and contact transmission.

① Kick the ball

You can play while keeping a distance from each other.

② Skip the rope

For safety sake, skipping the rope is usually played while keeping a distance.

③ Step on shadow

You can play without contact.

④ Rhythmic exercise and dance

You can move your body enjoyably while securing your own space.

⑤ Relay race

Instead of touching with a baton, place the hoops on the ground, and when you enter

the hoop, your partner can start.

(5) Regarding the tunnels of the fixed playground equipment in the park or in the playground, it is possible to play inside a well-ventilated tunnel with good air circulation. However, please refrain from playing in a tunnel with poor ventilation when a crowded state is created, for example, when several people are playing inside the tunnel or when playing in a long tunnel.

日本における新型コロナウイルス感染「第5波」の影響を受けて

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はじめに

わが国における新型コロナウイルス感染「第5波」の影響を受けて、新型コロナウイルス感染が学童へも広がりを見せ、子どもへのより一層の注意が必要になっています。また、日本列島は、災害が多く、新型コロナウイルス感染拡大と自然災害がダブルで生じた場合の対応が、今、求められています。子どもにとっては、感染対策としての自粛制限の影響を受けて、成長の場である外あそび場や公園での活動も激減していますが、コロナ禍における外あそびについて、何に注意して、どのようなあそびができるのか等、コロナ禍における私の考えをまとめて述べてみたいと思います。

新型コロナウイルス感染の学童への広がりには注意

2021年9月、新型コロナウイルスの感染が子どもに広がり、子どもが通う学童保育、放課後児童クラブも、今まで以上に対応に追われるようになりました。わが国各地で、学童での集団感染（クラスター）も発生し、さらなる緊張が続いています。学童の多くの場で気を遣うのが、食事とあそびであり、おやつ提供は原則中止という通知が出る市も出てきました（例:横浜市）。これまで以上に、手洗いと消毒、子ども同士の距離をとり、黙食を徹底している事業所は多く、不安は多いことでしょう。また、子どもたちが安心して過ごせるあそび環境を作るには、3密を避けながら、とくに1か所に集まってしまう子どもたちを分散させる気配りが必要ですが、そのためにも、子どもたちに目を配る職員の確保が必要です。しかし、待遇がネックになって、恒常的にスタッフが足りない現実を見ます

と、コロナ禍で、スペースの狭さや人手不足の問題がますます顕在化して、子ども支援の展開が難しくなってきた感があります。

このコロナ禍においても、学童は保育園と同様に、開所を原則としていますが、児童と職員の感染が発生し、クラスターも生じている報告を聞きますと、運営の安全を保つことが、とても難しくなっているということがわかります。

したがって、子どもに接する仕事の従事者が、ワクチン接種が優先的にできるようにすることが、今、必要なことと考えますが、優先接種の実施は、一部にとどまっている感があります。国や自治体に対して、学童職員や指導員への早急の優先接種をお願いしたいものです。

新型コロナウイルス感染拡大下で、災害が生じたらどうしたらよいか

自然災害の多い日本では、災害時の避難のあり方の検討がなされ、すべきことが周知・徹底されていなくてはなりません。災害時の時の避難所の収容能力は、コロナ対策で大きく減っているのが現状でしょう。また、避難しても、感染症のリスクがつきまといまいます。最寄りの避難所の情報をつかんでいても、コロナ下では、感染症対策のため、収容定員や換気をはじめとする衛生管理状況の問題もあり、希望する避難所に入れるとは限りません。そのため、日頃から、避難所以外の選択肢を、自身で考えて見つけておくことが求められます。場所としては、川や急斜面が近くにないこと、高台のある郊外や車中避難場所のある所なら、車中泊も選択肢の一つになります。その際、換気不足や運動不足に気をつけ、食料確保も重要です。その他、近くにある頑丈な宿泊施設の利用も一つの選択肢です。

コロナで自宅療養されている方の場合、他に避難する手段のない場合、あるいは、危険が迫り、ほかに選択肢がない場合には、コロナ禍でも、ためらわずに、身近に設置された災害時の避難所に行くべきと考えます。

避難所で過ごす場合、予防を徹底して、床を介した感染には、ことのほか注意が必要です。まず、密を避けること、手洗いやアルコール消毒を徹底すること、マスクを着用すること、1時間に2回以上の喚起に努めることは必要です。中でも、避難所の床は、ウイルスで汚染されている可能性もあるため、段ボールで他者との仕切り状態を確保したり、ベッド上で自身のスペースで過ごしたりすることが求められます。おにぎりやパン等の食品は、袋やパッケージに入れたまま食べること、ごみ処理は、ごみ袋を密封して、共用ゴミ袋に入れること等をおすすめします。

コロナ下の大規模災害への日頃の準備については、水や食料（3日分：ごはん、レトルト食品、ビスケット、チョコ、乾パン）、洗面用具（歯ブラシ、歯磨き粉）、タオル、使い捨てマスクや体温計、衣類やレインウェア、運動靴、感染予防グッズ（アルコール消毒液）、救急用品（ばんそうこう、包帯、消毒液、常備薬）、マウスウォッシュ（清潔な口内環境の

保持)、爪切り（手指からの感染予防）、懐中電灯、携帯ラジオ、予備電池、モバイルバッテリー、ライター・マッチ、ろうそく、スリッパ（床を介した感染防止用）、使い捨てカイロ、ブランケット、軍手、貴重品（現金、通帳、運転免許証、診察券）などを持ち出し袋に入れておきましょう。

避難所では、コロナ禍で在宅療養の人を、ほかの避難者とは別の専用スペースで受入られると思いますが、やむを得ず同じ建物の場合は、動線を分けることと、専用階段や通路、スペースを確保することが求められます。もし避難所で発熱したら、すぐに管理者に報告しましょう。

コロナ禍における子どもの外あそび

最後に、コロナ禍における子どもの外あそびを、どのように進めるかを、5つにまとめてみます。まず、基本的な私の考え方ですが、外あそび場の中で、子どもの貴重な居場所でもある公園は、町の肺であり、空気の転換場であると考えています。

（1）公園の中でも、人が多い場所を避けて、混雑する場所や時間帯は見合わせましょう。また、2m以内に人が集まるような密集状態を作らないことが大切です。要は、①混んでいたら利用しない、②いつもより短めに使う、③長い時間、同じ場所に留まって独占しない（密集を作らない）ことです。

（2）利用上のマナーとして、マスク着用や咳エチケットの励行、帰宅後の手洗い、うがいの徹底などをこまめに行い、大切な人にうつさない感染予防の取り組みが必要です。

（3）体調の優れない時、咳やくしゃみの症状がある時、発熱がある場合の外あそびや公園利用は、控えさせることです。

（4）飛沫感染と接触感染を防ぐことのできるおススメのあそびをご紹介します。

- ①お互いの距離を保って遊べる「ボールの蹴りっこ」
- ②安全のために、通常でも距離を取って遊ぶ「なわとび」
- ③コンタクトを避ける「影ふみ」
- ④自己空間を維持しながら楽しく動ける「リズム体操やダンス」
- ⑤バトンでのタッチでなく、地上にフープを置き、そのフープの中に入ったら、タッチしたこととする「リレーごっこ」等があげられます。

（5）公園や園庭の固定遊具の中のトンネルについてですが、空気の流通や換気の良いトンネルでのあそびは可能ですが、換気が悪く、トンネルの中に数人がこもって遊ぶ遊び方や長いトンネルでのあそびは、密閉状態をつくりますので、控えさせましょう。