

# The Impact of Chronic Illness on the Healthy Sibling

## Introduction

A chronically ill child can impose a great deal of stress on a family. The increased need for time and resources from the parents means the healthy sibling can become forgotten or neglected, leading to maladaptive behaviors. Providing care as a nurse to both the ill child and the healthy sibling can promote well-being for the family.

## Maladaptive Behaviors

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Poor self-esteem
- Poor academic performance
- Defiant behavior
- Isolation
- Lack of attendance and participation
- Attention seeking behaviors
- Physical symptoms



## Ways To Promote Wellness in the Healthy Sibling

- Summer camps
- Support groups
- Sibling training
- Involvement in plan of care
- One on one education with the nurse
- Family-based support

## Discussion

Well siblings of children with chronic illness have twice the chance of developing emotional and behavioral problems compared to siblings of healthy children. It is important as health care professionals to not only care for our patient but the family unit. Even though siblings are not true admitted patients it is vital that nurses and other health care professionals do not neglect siblings because they don't present with physical symptoms, it is just as important to care for people mentally as physically.