

Tips for Teachers: The Sibling Experience

Siblings who have a brother or sister being treated at Dana-Farber/Boston Children's often experience challenges. While children may react differently, below are some reactions siblings may experience, along with some suggestions that may be helpful.

Possible Sibling Reactions to a Brother or Sister's Illness While in School

- Complaints of not feeling well
- Withdrawal such as participating less or being less social
- Change in academic performance
- Periods of extreme productivity (over-achievement)
- Frequent absences or tardiness

Suggestions

School is often the place where a sibling can get a break from the concerns that they have. Sometimes, giving the sibling space, and not asking how the family or patient is coping, is most helpful. Check in with the student to see what is helpful to them during this time.

- Provide as much positive feedback as possible
- View irritability as sadness rather than confrontation
- Confirm the contact list of adult caregivers for sibling
- Encourage peer support
- Modify academic demands

Please contact the parent(s) or guardian(s) if you have any concerns.

Contact Us

For patient care assistance, please call the following phone numbers:

- Jimmy Fund Clinic (617) 632-3270
Business Hours 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday
- Page Operator (617) 632-3352
Off hours: weekdays after 5 p.m., holidays, and weekends
Page pediatric hematology/oncology fellow on call
- Life Threatening Emergencies dial 911