



A monthly publication provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education.

Resources for Families

Tips for a healthy school year

Each year, parents hear tried-and-true tips for a successful school year, but they bear repeating. Students can start the year off right – and parents can help them – with proven advice for a healthy year that works for every grade.

Go to bed early

Getting enough sleep is a game changer for students. Health professionals say that sleep affects behavior, mood and academic performance for the more than two-thirds of all children estimated to have a sleep problem.

Studies suggest that poor sleepers are more depressed, tired, moody, stressed and irritable and they do poorly in school compared to their rested peers. One study found that students who got Cs, Ds and Fs slept about 25 minutes less per night than students who earned As and Bs.

www.humana.com/learning-center/health-and-wellbeing/healthy-living/kids-health

Tips for better sleep habits

An abrupt transition from long summer days to an early school wake up schedule is difficult. It is important to begin phasing in a school night schedule before summer ends. Move your child's bedtime up a little each night. Start a few weeks before the first day.

Here are some additional tips to help children develop good sleep habits:

- Keep a consistent sleep and wake schedule
- Avoid high-stimulation activities before bed
- Avoid caffeine in the afternoon and evening
- Exercise during the day
- Delay bedtime if not drowsy

For more information, read Sleep Hygiene for Children. www.seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE1066.pdf

Eat for success

The right foods can have a big impact on school success, affecting concentration, problem solving, coordination, alertness, creativity and endurance.

A study in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that skipping breakfast can result in lower academic performance. <http://bit.ly/1C9WgNo>

Cereal isn't the only breakfast option. Healthy choices include half a whole grain bagel with peanut butter and raisins; low-fat yogurt and toast; scrambled eggs with shredded cheese and salsa. Good choices contain protein, low fat and low sugar.

Pick the right backpack

For many adults, back pain can be traced to childhood and heavy backpack burdens. Even at very young ages, students are carrying too much weight on their backs.

Daily carrying of books, clothing, musical instruments and other items is often too much weight on children's still-forming muscles and bones.

Heavy backpacks can take a physical toll by sapping students' energy and even causing orthopedic damage, such as stress fractures, inflammation of cartilage and nerve damage.

Parents can help minimize risks for back problems with these tips recommended by health experts:

- If affordable, consider buying a second heavy instrument or, if possible, borrowing one from school so children don't have to carry it every day.
- Ask teachers which items must be packed every day and which items can be left at school or home.



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- Find a well-designed backpack and adjust the straps so the bottom of the pack hits no lower than four inches below the waist.
- Select a pack that is no bigger than necessary.

<http://nyti.ms/1R4yJUH>

Manage school stress

Too much stress is not healthy and can be counterproductive. Many students feel stress from academic pressure, which can turn into depression and anxiety. The start of a new school year is a good time to watch for signs of stress and practice ways to manage it.

Health experts recommend these tips:

- **Watch for signs of stress**
Extreme behavior, such as cutting, is stress-related and easy to spot. Other less obvious signs are expressions of despair or hopelessness and complaints of headaches, stomach-aches and reluctance to go to school.
- **Teach time management skills**
Organizational skills can significantly reduce school stress. Teach kids to keep on top of homework rather than cramming.
- **Re-evaluate activities and avoid overscheduling**
Too many activities and advanced courses contribute to high stress in students. This is a greater problem for older students, but younger students are at-risk, too. It's important to strike a balance between school work, organized activities and play. Watch for the signs of stress and then help your child take a break. Students need time to recharge and remember to have fun during these brief school years.

- **Encourage sleep, exercise and family meals**

Adequate sleep is essential to health, school performance and stress levels. Exercise and strong family connections can also significantly reduce stress levels. Health experts suggest family mealtimes – a minimum of 20 minutes at least four to five times a week – for communicating and connecting with children.

- **Beware of parental pressure**

Parents inadvertently stress their kids by pressuring them to excel in school. Shift the focus from grades to questions about how students feel and what they are learning.

www.webmd.com/parenting/features/coping-school-stress