

Are you ready? ...School Tips

It should come as no surprise that success — or failure — at school starts at home. Studies have linked poor academic performance to factors such as a lack of sleep, poor nutrition, obesity, and a lack of parental support.

Making the First Day Easier

Remind your child that she is not the only student who is a bit uneasy about the first day of school. Teachers know that students are anxious and will make an extra effort to make sure everyone feels as comfortable as possible. Point out the positive aspects of starting school: It will be fun. She'll see old friends and meet new ones. Refresh her positive memories about previous years, when she may have returned home after the first day with high spirits because she had a good time. Find another child in the neighborhood with whom your youngster can walk to school or ride with on the bus. If you feel it is appropriate, drive your child (or walk with her) to school and pick her up on the first day.

Eating During the School Day

Most schools regularly send schedules of cafeteria menus home. With this advance information, you can plan on packing lunch on the days when the main course is one your child prefers not to eat. Try to get your child's school to stock healthy choices such as fresh fruit, low-fat dairy products, water and 100 percent fruit juice in the vending machines. Each 12-ounce soft drink contains approximately 10 teaspoons of sugar and 150 calories. Drinking just one can of soda a day increases a child's risk of obesity by 60%. Restrict your child's soft drink consumption.

Before and After School Child Care

During middle childhood, youngsters need supervision. A responsible adult should be available to get them ready and off to school in the morning and watch over them after school until you return home from work. Children approaching adolescence (11- and 12-year-olds) should not come home to an empty house in the afternoon unless they show unusual maturity for their age. If alternate adult supervision is not available, parents should make special efforts to supervise their children from a distance. Children should have a set time when they are expected to arrive at home and should check in with a neighbor or with a parent by telephone. If you choose a commercial after-school program, inquire about the training of the staff. There should be a high staff-to-child ratio, and the rooms and the playground should be safe.

Developing Good Study and Homework Habits

Create an environment that is conducive to doing homework. Youngsters need a permanent workspace in their bedroom or another part of the home that offers privacy. Students should set aside ample time for homework. Establish a household rule that the TV set stays off during homework time. Supervise computer and Internet use. Be available to answer questions and offer assistance, but never do a child's homework for her. Take steps to help alleviate eye fatigue, neck fatigue and brain fatigue while studying. It may be helpful to close the books for a few minutes, stretch, and take a break periodically when it will not be too disruptive. If your child is struggling with a particular subject, and you aren't able to help her yourself, a tutor can be a good solution. Talk it over with your child's teacher first.

So in summary...

- 1) Enforce Healthy Habits of eating, sleeping, snacking and playing (computer games.)
- 2) Stick to a Routine
- 3) Create a “Launch Pad”- have a single place to put backpacks, jackets, etc.
- 4) Designate a study space
- 5) Read, Again and Again
- 6) Learn Always - There’s only so much teachers can do. Parents have to fill in with good support at home. Look for ways to teach your child throughout the day. For example, cooking combines elements of math and science. Use the time when you make dinner as an opportunity to read and follow directions, to discuss fractions, to make hypotheses (“What will happen when I beat the egg whites?”), and to examine results.
- 7) Take the Lead -Children learn by example. Let your kids “catch” you reading. Take time to learn a new skill and discuss the experience with them. Sit down and pay bills or do other “homework” while your kids do their schoolwork. If you display a strong work ethic and continually seek out learning opportunities for yourself, your kids will begin to model that same behavior in their own lives.
- 8) Talk Often - Do you know how your child feels about her classroom, her teacher, and her classmates? If not, ask her. Talk with her about what she likes and doesn’t like at school. Give her a chance to express her anxieties, excitements, or disappointments about each day, and continue to support and encourage her by praising her achievements and efforts.
- 9) Show Interest - Don’t limit your support to your child; extend it to her teachers as well. Meet the teachers and stay in regular contact by phone or e-mail so that you can discuss any concerns as they arise. Not only will it pave the way for you to ask questions, but it will also make the teachers more comfortable with calling you if they have concerns about your child.
- 10) Expect Success - Perhaps the most important way you can support your child’s efforts at school is to expect him to succeed. That doesn’t mean that you demand he be the best student or the best athlete or the best artist. Rather, let him know that you expect him to do “his best” so that he’ll be proud of what he can accomplish. If you make that expectation clear and provide a home environment that promotes learning, then your child will have a greater chance of becoming the best student he can be.

Asthma Management at School

Children spend a significant part of their day at school. That is why it is so important that asthma symptoms are well managed while they are there. It is also important that you are aware of your child’s symptoms and any problems with how your child’s asthma is managed in school.

Effective Communication

Good communication is essential to asthma care and management in school. The school needs to know about your child’s asthma, how severe it is, what medications your child takes, and what to do in an emergency. This communication can be helped by having your health care provider complete an asthma action plan for the school, as well as a medication permission form that includes whether your child should be allowed to carry and use her own inhaler. You should also sign a release at school and at your health care provider’s office to allow the exchange of medical information between you, the school, and your health care provider.

Your child's school needs to communicate to you its policies on how your child will get access to her medications and how they deal with emergencies, field trips, and after-school activities. The school should also inform you about any changes or problems with your child's symptoms while she is at school.

Peak Flow Meter

Peak flow meters can be helpful for school staff in determining the severity of an asthma attack. If your child's health care provider has recommended a peak flow meter, determine your child's best peak flow (your health care provider should tell you how to do this). Then keep a peak flow meter at school. ***Also important to make sure your child sees his or her health care provider every 3 months to check his/her asthma. At these visits they can assess your child's pulmonary lung functions with a PFT machine or a peak flow meter to make sure their medications are working properly.

Coping With Asthma at School

Students with asthma face a number of problems related to school. Talk to your child about how well his asthma is being managed in school. Also talk to your child's teachers, school nurse, coaches, and other school personnel to get their opinions on how well your child is coping with asthma in school and to see if asthma symptoms are causing any of the following problems:

- Missing school due to asthma symptoms or doctor visits.
- Avoiding school or school activities. Work with your health care provider and school personnel to encourage your child to participate in school activities.
- Not taking medication before exercise. Your child may avoid going to the school office or nurse's office to use his inhaler before exercise. Schools that allow children to carry their inhalers with them can help avoid this problem.
- Side effects from medication. Some asthma medications may alter your child's ability to perform in school. Teachers need to know if and when your child takes asthma medication so that you can be notified if there are any problems.
- Physical activity is important for your child's physical and mental health. Children with asthma should be able, and encouraged, to participate completely in physical education, sports, and other activities in school. All students should have some knowledge of asthma basics and management. Encourage your school to offer asthma awareness education as part of the health education curriculum.

Know Your Rights

Learn about the federal laws that can help you with asthma management concerns at school. These include the following:

Section 504 of the Civil Rights Act of 1973
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)