

# WELLNESS EXCHANGE

August 2014 Newsletter

## Back to School Health & Safety Tips

Ease first-day jitters, plan ahead and be prepared for a great school year with these health and safety tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).



### Making the First Day Easier

- **Other kids will be nervous, too.** Remind your child that there are probably a lot of other students who are nervous or 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.
- **Going back to school will be fun.** Point out the positive aspects of starting school: It will be fun! They will see old friends and meet new ones. Refresh your child's positive memories about previous years, when he or she may have returned home after the first day with high spirits because they had a good time.
- **Find a "buddy".** Find another child in the neighborhood with whom your youngster can walk to school or ride on the bus.

### Backpack Safety

- **Use the right backpack.** Choose a backpack with wide, padded shoulder straps and a padded back.
- **Pack light.** Organize the backpack to use all of its compartments. Pack heavier items closest to the center of the back. The backpack should never weigh more than 10 to 20 percent of your child's body weight.
- **Always use both shoulder straps.** Slung a backpack over one shoulder can strain muscles.

### Riding the School Bus

Review the basic rules with your child:

- **Wait for the bus to stop** before approaching it from the curb.
- **Sit still.** Do not move around on the bus.
- **Cross the street safely.** Check to see that no other traffic is coming before crossing the street.
- **Make sure you walk where you can see the bus driver.** This means the driver will be able to see you, too.

### Walking to School

- **Know the route.** Make sure your child's walk to school is a safe route with well-trained adult crossing guards at every intersection.
- **Be realistic about your child's pedestrian skills.** Because small children are impulsive and less cautious around traffic, carefully consider whether or not your child is ready to walk to school without adult supervision.
- **Walk with your child.** If your children are young or are walking to a new school, walk with them the first week or until you are sure they know the route and can do it safely.
- **Dress your child in bright colors.** Bright-colored clothing will make your child more visible to drivers.
- **Try a "walking school bus".** In neighborhoods with higher levels of traffic, consider organizing a "walking school bus," in which an adult accompanies a group of neighborhood children walking to school.

### Eating During the School Day

- **Know your school's menu.** Most schools regularly send schedules of cafeteria menus home. With this advance information, you can plan on packing a healthy lunch on the days when the main course is one your child prefers not to eat.
- **What snacks are available?** 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.
- **Restrict your child's soft drink consumption.** 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%.

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# The End of Summer

The end of summer means the start of a new school year, new schedules and changes to everyone's routine. Regardless of your family situation, getting back into the swing of things after summer vacation can be difficult and stressful.



The following tips can help you return to "regular" life after summer vacation, as well as better manage the changing routines of your family, coworkers and friends over the next few weeks.

## Returning to Work After Summer Vacation

- **Use your last vacation day as a "rebound" day.** Instead of waiting to sleep on the plane or taking that one last hurrah, take that last day off and use it as your time to rebound from your trip. Enjoy some quiet, relaxing alone time. This will help you to be physically and mentally prepared for the demands you will face the next day when you return to work.
- **Get there early.** Try to arrive a few minutes early on your first few days back. This will allow you to get situated before diving in to the long list of emails, tasks, or meetings that may await you after an extended time away from the office.
- **Prioritize your responses.** Not all of those voicemails and messages in your inbox need to be answered on your first day back. Prioritize emails by sender and nature. Follow up with those who have immediate demands. For those who don't, send a quick message to let the sender know you have received their message and that you will follow up with them as soon as you have a chance.
- **Set realistic expectations.** Accept that it is simply impossible to catch up on everything you missed in one day. Pace yourself so that you don't feel completely overwhelmed with catching up. Don't be afraid to ask for an extension on tasks that require extra time or focus for proper completion. If a hard deadline is looming, you may have to chip in some extra time at the office, but if you took that extra day to rest at the end of your vacation, you'll be thanking yourself.

## Back to School Time Savers

- **Plan meals in advance.** Create a weekly menu for breakfast, lunch and dinner – and stick to it. Doing so will eliminate the day-to-day stress of deciding what to pack in lunch bags or what to put on the table after a long day of work. You can also skip last-minute trips to the store by using your menu to make sure you have everything on hand for the week.

- **Make a weekly schedule.** Take time each weekend to update your calendar for the upcoming week. Include extracurricular activities, meetings, events, school field trips, appointments and pick-up/drop-off times. Add in any activities that may have popped up and erase any that might have been cancelled.
- **Select outfits the night before.** Make a joint decision with your child on what they will wear to school the next day. This decreases stress and deters possible arguments over school-appropriate outfits the next morning.
- **Give yourself 20 minutes of "me time".** Wake up 20 minutes before the rest of your family. Enjoy a cup of coffee, go for a short walk, or simply focus on getting yourself ready for the day in peace. This allows you to put your full attention and energy toward helping your family get ready once they wake up, which will save time in the long run.

## Other Ways to Take Charge of Your Time

- **Prioritize.** Create a list of priorities on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. Be sure your list is organized so the most time-sensitive and important items are completed first.
- **Minimize interruptions.** Arrange your work day so you can keep interruptions to a minimum. If your job allows, turn on voicemail at certain intervals to avoid getting off task. Schedule specific times to check and reply to emails to avoid interruptions every few minutes.
- **Delegate.** Don't take everything on yourself. Delegate duties to appropriate coworkers and people in your life, when possible. Virtual assistants and time management apps are also helpful ways to use technology as a task manager.
- **Notice your daily energy patterns.** Complete important tasks when your energy is at its peak. Save tasks that are less important and those that are more routine for when your energy tends to be lower.
- **Take breaks.** Make it a point to get up from your workstation at least once every hour for a short break. Take a quick walk, eat lunch away from your workstation, fill up your water bottle, etc. Giving your brain a rest and rejuvenating your body will make you more productive for the rest of the day.



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