

August is:

- Back-to-School Preparations
- Children's Eye Health and Safety Month
- National Immunization Awareness Month
- Have a GREAT 2022 - 2023 School Year!!!



6 Ways to Ease Your Child's Back-to-School Anxiety- Learning Liftoff

More kids in elementary, high school, and college report anxiety now than ever before. In fact, anxiety is the most common reason students seek counseling support, according to recent studies. So, it's not surprising that many kids experience back-to-school anxiety. It's a new routine with unfamiliar teachers and classmates. Kids who have been bullied in past years may worry that they'll again be harassed in the new school year. Maybe the curriculum will be too difficult, or they won't like their teachers. The thought of facing a new school year can be daunting for even the bravest of students.

And today's students also face a fear that was likely not a problem when their parents attended school—the possibility of a school shooting. “More people have died or been injured in mass school shootings in the United States in the past 18 years than in the entire 20th century,” according to Springer.com, which published a study on SCHOOL SHOOTINGS IN THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES.

What was once unimaginable has become an all-too-common occurrence in schools across the country. While some experts say parents tend to have more anxiety about school shootings than kids, many students do fear for their safety as the threat of school violence continues to escalate and horrific scenes of the aftermath of shootings dominate the news and social media. And the efforts of schools to protect the students by instituting new procedures and frequent safety drills may just emphasize the dangers to some kids, which can increase their stress levels.

In His Service,



“The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.”

Psalms 29:11



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For some students, the uncertainty and stress they feel can be overwhelming. If not addressed, their anxiety may manifest as physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, or extreme fatigue. In some cases, a professional counselor may be needed, but parents can take the following steps to ease their children's anxiety and prepare them for a less stressful school year.

Discuss the Fears

A good start to easing a child's back-to-school nerves is to give him or her the opportunity to voice specific fears. For example, ask what he is looking forward to as well as what makes him apprehensive about going back to school. Then empathize and acknowledge, rather than dismiss fears. Discuss ways to handle potential problems such as dealing with bullies, peer pressure, or other difficult situations. Role-playing may be helpful for younger kids. It's important for children to know that they can turn to their parents for support and having an open discussion about their fears will reinforce that supportive role.

If you suspect your child is worried about school shootings, it's best to have a conversation about it, especially if it's been in the news recently. "Avoiding potentially scary topics can make them scarier to children," according to the Child Mind Institute. Try to put the risk into perspective and offer reassurances, but don't dismiss their fears or speak in unrealistic terms.

Reduce the Uncertainties

New teachers, new friends, sometimes even a new school building can all add up to fear of the unknown. Most children need a sense of predictability and security to feel at ease, so the thought of a new school year will fill them with trepidation. You can remove some of your children's fear of the unknown by giving them a preview of what to expect. Take the worried child to the school and, if possible, walk through the halls, see the new classroom, and meet the teacher. Meeting neighborhood children who will be in the child's class can also be helpful, so try to arrange a play date for younger kids.

Have Reasonable Expectations

Getting good grades is important, but a parent's high expectations can lead to excessive student stress, which can have less than hoped for results. Instead of focusing on grades, emphasize the importance of learning and set short-term, achievable goals—like completing homework on time—at the beginning of the school year. Pediatrician William Sears cautions parents to "be realistic" with goals that are based on the child's strengths. It may also be helpful to remind children that feeling comfortable in their new school setting will take time, they shouldn't expect to make best friends and impress their teachers on the first day of school. And remember, feelings are not facts, so look for facts to counter their fears. If they worry they won't make friends, remind them that they did make friends last year.

Stay Healthy

Adequate sleep, proper nutrition, and exercise will help combat stress and strengthen a child's ability to face his fears. Sleep deprivation will only make the anxiety seem worse, so it's important to transition children to their new sleep schedule before the first day of school. A week or so before school starts, ease children back into the

earlier schedule by having them go to bed 10 minutes earlier each night until the new bedtime is reached. Remember to enforce healthy eating habits and provide a nutritious breakfast, especially once school starts. Lastly, ensure children are exercising, preferably outside. According to the Mayo Clinic, exercise can “help reduce anxiety and improve mood,” with the added benefits of boosting self-confidence and providing distractions from worries.

Focus on the Positive

It’s easy for kids to let their fearful and negative thoughts about school cloud their outlook. Redirecting their thoughts to the positive aspects of the upcoming year will decrease their stress levels and improve their health. It also prevents them from dwelling on the negative. Remind them of their strengths and of the times they’ve overcome adversity in the past and how positive thinking can reduce stress.

Use Reading Resources

It’s always helpful to discover that others have struggled with the same problems and learned to overcome them. The weeks before and after school begins provide an ideal time to read books that address back-to-school concerns. Younger children may find these books especially helpful: *First Day Jitters* by Julie Danneberg, *This School Year Will Be THE BEST!* by Kay Winters, and *It’s Time for School, Stinky Face* by Lisa McCourt.

Kids will pick up on cues from their parents, so be sure to be positive and encouraging. Of course, some situations may become serious, like bullying or falling significantly behind in class, so more direct intervention or a school change may be needed.

If kids are extremely anxious about going back to class, it may be a sign that their school is not providing them with the best learning environment. Many parents find online learning to be a better alternative. Online schools, powered by K12, offer families the security of learning from home with the advantages of certified teachers and a rigorous, interactive curriculum. Visit [K12.com](https://www.k12.com) to learn more or find an online school in your state using the new K12 app.

Easing your child’s fears and anxiety will go a long way toward allowing them to do their best academically!

For more information / tips on dealing with youth anxiety, visit the links shared by Trinity MB Church, to view videos shared during the recent Anxiety Awareness Conference (June 2022): <https://www.trinitymbchurch.org/anxiety-awareness-1>

Safety tips for attending school during COVID-19

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, families and caregivers might worry about their child getting the COVID-19 virus at school.



Unfortunately, COVID-19 outbreaks do happen in school settings. But research has shown that when schools use multiple prevention strategies, the spread of the COVID-19 virus in schools is often lower than or similar to community spread.

What can you do to protect your school-aged child? Consider the strategies schools and families can follow to protect students' health.

Encouraging COVID-19 vaccination

COVID-19 vaccines are available for children age 5 and older in the U.S. A COVID-19 vaccine and booster doses might prevent your child from getting the COVID-19 virus or becoming seriously ill or hospitalized due to COVID-19. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine can also help keep your child in school and more safely participate in sports and other group activities.

In the U.S., fully vaccinated children also don't need to quarantine after a known exposure if they don't have symptoms, with some exceptions.

Wearing face masks

School policies vary when it comes to face masks. However, whether or not you're vaccinated, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends wearing a face mask in indoor public spaces if you're in a community with a high number of new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. Consistently and correctly wearing a well-fitting mask indoors can limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

If your child wears a face mask in school, consider these tips:

- Have your child wear the most protective mask possible that fits well and is comfortable.
- Provide your child with a clean mask and a backup mask each day. Consider giving your child a clean, resealable bag to store the mask during lunch.
- Label your child's mask so it's not confused with other children's masks. Tell your child to never wear another child's used mask.

Safe distancing

Social distancing, also called physical distancing, is the practice of allowing enough space between individuals to reduce the spread of disease. In general, the CDC recommends that people who haven't been fully vaccinated keep a physical distance of at least 6 feet (2 meters) from people who aren't in their households when indoors. Based on research from the 2020 to 2021 school year, the CDC recommends that schools maintain a physical distance of at least 3 feet (about 1 meter) between students in classrooms. When this isn't possible, other prevention strategies become more important.

Some schools also separate students into small groups and have each group stay together throughout the day (cohorting). This strategy can limit the number of students, teachers and staff who come into contact with each other. Cohorting is often used with small children, who have trouble maintaining physical distance.

Screening testing

Screening testing identifies people with COVID-19 who don't have symptoms and who don't have a known, suspected or reported exposure to COVID-19. This program identifies unknown cases of COVID-19 so schools can take steps to prevent further spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Schools vary in their use of screening testing and may change requirements based on the spread of COVID-19 in their communities. Some schools might routinely test all students and staff or just those who haven't been fully vaccinated. Schools might also test students before allowing them to take part in certain activities.

Proper ventilation

Improving ventilation in schools can reduce the number of COVID-19 virus particles in the air. Opening multiple windows and doors, using fans, or changing the heating, ventilation, air conditioning or air filtration systems can help. During transportation to and from school, keeping windows open a few inches also can improve air circulation.

Handwashing

Schools and parents should encourage students to frequently wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Children should cover their mouths and noses with an elbow or a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Children also should avoid touching their eyes, noses and mouths. To ensure thorough handwashing, kids can be taught to keep washing their hands until they have sung the entire "Happy Birthday" song twice (about 20 seconds).

Staying home when sick and getting tested

Students who have symptoms of an infectious illness should stay home from school and get tested for COVID-19. Possible symptoms of COVID-19 in children include:

- Fever
- Cough that becomes productive
- Chest pain
- New loss of taste or smell
- Changes in the skin, such as discolored areas on the feet and hands
- Sore throat
- Nausea, vomiting, belly pain or diarrhea
- Chills
- Muscle aches and pain
- Extreme fatigue
- New severe headache
- New nasal congestion

Everyone with COVID-19 should stay home and isolate from others for at least five full days. School policies might vary on when a child who has had COVID-19 can return to school.

Contact tracing

Contact tracing is the process of identifying people who may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19. Depending on their vaccination status, people who've had close contact with someone with COVID-19 might need to take extra precautions. Contact tracing can help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

If your child's school does contact tracing, make sure you understand what steps your child needs to take after a COVID-19 exposure.

Cleaning and disinfecting

Cleaning once a day is usually enough to remove germs from surfaces in schools.

What to do if your child gets COVID-19

Even if your family and your child's school carefully follow these prevention strategies, it's still possible for your child to get COVID-19. If your child tests positive for COVID-19:

- Talk to your child's health care provider. Keep your child home from school and away from others, except to get medical care.
- Focus on relieving your child's symptoms. This might include rest, plenty of fluids and use of pain relievers.
- Contact your child's school. Make sure you understand the school's policy on when your child can return to school. Find out if distance learning is an option while your child remains at home.
- Consider picking one person in your family to care for your sick child. Have that caregiver stay away from others in your home, when possible.
- Call the health care provider if your child keeps getting sicker. Emergency warning signs include trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, and pale, gray, or blue-colored skin, lips or nail beds — depending on your child's skin color.

Protecting Your Child's Eyes and Vision

There are many things you can do to keep your child's eyes healthy and seeing clearly from birth through the teen years.

What Can I Do to Protect My Child's Sight?

To help protect your child's eyesight:

- Eat right both during pregnancy and after. Your baby will be healthier and you will set a good example.
- Provide nutritious meals with fruits, vegetables, nuts, and up to 12 ounces a week of fish. These foods contain key antioxidants and nutrients such as vitamin C, vitamin E, zinc, omega-3 fatty acids, and lutein, which are linked to eye health. (Buy fish such as salmon, shrimp, canned light tuna, catfish, or pollock. Young children should avoid shark, swordfish, mackerel, or tilefish because they contain high levels of mercury.)

- Provide your child with age-appropriate toys that are free from sharp edges.
- Give your child toys that encourage visual development.
- Watch your baby for signs that the eyes are crossed or turned out.
- Look at your baby for any haziness or clouding in the pupil.
- Provide sun protection when outdoors by means of shelter or UV coated lenses, especially if your child's eyes are light in color.
- Be an example to your child by wearing the proper protective athletic gear when playing sports.
- Have your child's eyes examined regularly, particularly during infancy and childhood.
- How Can I Help My Baby Develop Good Eyesight?
- To help your baby develop good eyesight:
 - Place toys within focus of your baby's eyes, only 8 to 12 inches away.
 - Encourage your baby to crawl. This helps develop hand-eye coordination.
 - Talk to your baby as you move around the room to encourage their eyes to follow you.
 - Hang a mobile above or outside of your baby's crib.
 - Give your baby toys to hold and visualize.

Make sure your baby is following moving objects with their eyes and developing eye-hand coordination. If they seem delayed, talk to your child's doctor.

As your baby grows into an active child, continue to encourage good eyesight by providing visually stimulating toys that will improve motor and eye-hand coordination skills. Some good examples are:

- Building or linking blocks
- Puzzles
- Stringing beads
- Pegboards
- Drawing tools like pencils, chalk, crayons, and markers
- Finger paints
- Modeling clay



How Often Should My Child's Eyes Be Checked?

Experts have different opinions on vision screening and exams for children. Talk to your doctor about what's right for your child.

What Should I Do in an Eye Emergency?

Here are four first aid tips for eye injuries:

- If your child spills something in their eye and you don't know what it is, or if there are acid or alkaline substances in it, flush your child's eye with water for at least 20 minutes and have someone call for medical help or the local poison control center. Do not stop flushing your child's eye until medical help arrives unless instructed otherwise. If possible, show the chemical to health care providers.
- If your child is hit in the eye with a blunt object, examine the eye closely. If you see bleeding or cannot open the child's eyelids, seek immediate medical attention.
- If your child continues to be in pain, constantly rubs their injured eye, has persistent tearing, or complains of blurry or double vision, call the doctor. In the meantime, cover your child's injured eye with

a cold pack for 15 minutes every hour or so. If you are using an ice pack, wrap it in a moistened cloth so the eye does not become damaged from freezing.

- If your child's eye is injured with a sharp object, do NOT press on the eye or eyelid. Cover the eye with a shield (the cut-out bottom of a foam cup would do) and seek immediate medical attention. If the sharp object is still in the child's eye DO NOT remove it. Instead cover the eye and call 911.

NATIONAL IMMUNIZATION AWARENESS MONTH (NIAM)

National Immunization Awareness Month (NIAM) is an annual observance held in August to highlight the importance of vaccination for people of all ages.

CATCH UP ON CHECKUPS AND ROUTINE VACCINES

As your family gets back to routines, it's important for your child to catch up on checkups and recommended vaccines to help protect their health now and in the future.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends children stay on track with routine vaccinations to help protect them from serious diseases like measles and whooping cough.

WELL-CHILD CHECKUPS ARE ESSENTIAL

- The doctor **tracks your child's growth and development**
- You can **ask the doctor questions** about your child's health
- Your child **gets recommended vaccinations**

VACCINATION HELPS PROTECT YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH

- Routine vaccinations during childhood help prevent **14 diseases**
- Among children born from 1994-2018, vaccinations will prevent an estimated **936,000 early deaths, 8 million hospitalizations, and 419 million illnesses**

Help protect your child's health by keeping them on track with recommended vaccinations.

Have questions about vaccines? Talk to your child's doctor.

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/routine

Resources:

<https://www.learningliftoff.com/back-to-school-coping-with-student-stress-and-anxiety/>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/returning-safely-to-school-covid-19/art-20490441>

<https://www.webmd.com/eye-health/protecting-child-eye-sight>

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/events/niam/index.html>

<https://www.trinitymbchurch.org/anxiety-awareness-1>