

READY OR NOT, SCHOOL'S BACK!

Just when we were getting used to the leisurely days of summer; it's time for the kids to go back to school. As the summer winds down we leave behind memories of fun filled days with family and friends. Most kids wish summer could last forever. Parents on the other hand, may welcome the end of summer break. The entertainment ideas and money have just about run out and it's now time get ready for school. Ready or not, the time to buy new clothes, backpacks, notebooks, pencils, and other school supplies is here. The first school experience or the return to school can be exciting and overwhelming at the same time. Early preparation can help reduce stress, anxiety, and fear for both the child and the parents. Here is a list of suggestions to help you and your children prepare for the upcoming school year:

Medical check up and immunization requirements

A school entry physical is usually required for kindergarten or first grade, sport participants, and college entrants. Check with your school and remember to take the necessary forms to your doctor to fill out and sign. Also, note that most daycares and after school programs have similar requirements.

Your child will also need proof of all required immunizations including tuberculosis screen. If you misplaced it, get a copy from your medical provider. If your child is not up to date, you may schedule with your provider or contact the Sutter County Health Department (SCHD) at 822-7240 for shot clinic hours. For children 5 years and under there is also a free immunization program through the Sutter County Children's and Families Commission. It is not income based and the only requirement, besides age, is that the child resides in Sutter County. This service is also provided at the SCHD. I hope you will take advantage of this great program.

If your child will need to have medications administered at school or carries and administers his/her own medication, such as an asthma inhaler, you need to pick up the correct forms from the school and take them to your child's medical provider to fill out and sign.

It is best to complete these requirements early to avoid getting annoyed with your doctor's office for not having appointments/paperwork completed the day before school starts.

Registration, Transportation, Meals, and Attire

Make sure to register your child, fill out the health/emergency contact forms and provide the school with your child's medical provider and medical insurance information.

If your child will be riding the bus, check the bus schedule for pick up/drop off place and time.

If your child will be walking or riding bicycle to school check for safe route to and from school as well as storage of bicycle and safety gear.

It is a good idea to introduce the child to the new school/classroom/teacher at least once before school starts to help reduce first day jitters.

If your child will be eating at school arrange and pay for school breakfast/lunch/snack as required by your school.

Check with your school for clothing attire/uniform/gym class requirements.

School Supplies

Purchase only what your child will need. Make a budget and stick to it. Avoid getting caught up in the shopping frenzy created mostly by the retailers.

How to choose the right backpack for your child:

Choose proper size for age/size of child

Wide and padded shoulder straps are a must to avoid pain and discomfort.

A padded back is more comfortable and protects the child from sharp edges on objects inside the backpack.

Backpack safety and injury prevention

A full backpack should never weigh more than 10-20% of your child's weight, so teach your child how to pack light.

Always use both shoulder straps. Do not sling the backpack over one shoulder to avoid muscle strain or increase curvature of the spine.

Rolling backpacks are recommended for older students with heavier book loads, but remember these still have to be carried upstairs and are difficult to roll in the rain and lawn.

Stress and anxiety reduction

Get yourself and your child back on the school schedule at least one week before school starts. This avoids the morning fatigue and unnecessary arguments about not being ready on time.

Set aside clothing/backpack/supplies the night before to avoid rushing and stressing out in the morning.

Plan your meals the night before if your child is eating at home or packing a lunch.

Be available the first day of school to insure your child has a carefree first day.

Remember, being well prepared and organized will help reduce stress and anxiety for your child whether it is the first school experience, a new school or just return to school.

May you and your children have a fun, academically rewarding, and exciting school year.

Written by Olga Gonzalez, M. D.