



Offspring

Child Health Specialists

LET OUR FAMILY CARE FOR YOURS

Issue 1
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Tea Room News

Offshoot: Back to School

Q: How did you get straight A's?

A: By using a ruler!



Dr. Sarah Donoghue
Paediatrician
& Metabolic Physician



Leorah Kagan
Child Clinical
Psychologist



Maria Kouspos
Paediatric Speech
Pathologist

Starting or returning to school is such an important time in a child's life. We have put together a newsletter with contributions from our specialists with tips on how to prepare children for school.

How to prepare children for school

Starting school can feel like a journey to a foreign country where customs are different and you are not certain what to expect. This can be overwhelming for children, especially if they have not had the experience of early learning.

Parents can help their child's start to school by positively framing how the experience is likely to be and by focusing on the many wonderful opportunities. You can prepare your child for school by discussing the daily routine to allow them to anticipate and prepare for changes. Social stories allow children to identify through a character the changes they are likely to experience. Using tools such as, the "My new school" story which has been developed by Early Childhood Intervention Australia, allows children to mentally prepare for school by personalising a narrative story specifically for them (<http://www.ecia-nsw.org.au/tts-content/my-new-school-story/>).

Other activities to help with school preparation include:

- Simple games about taking turns and raising their hand when they want to answer a question.
- Learning to pack their bag
- Practising using a lunchbox and discussing what foods might be suitable for the lunch box. Cooking or preparing lunch box items together.
- Discussing the school uniform and buying school shoes that are easy to put on and take off
- Practising using the toilet and washing hands independently. Discussing that the toileting arrangements at school will be different for boys and girls.
- Discussing how to stay calm when things do not go their way.
- Practicing their calming routine at home. This may be concentrating on breathing out slowly, clenching and unclenching their fists several times or having a drink of water.

Sorting through difficulties with learning

When to suspect a learning difficulties

- When children are not able to complete age appropriate school work when compared to their peers
- When children are experiencing difficulties with their behavior in the classroom
- When children avoid doing tasks related to school work e.g., avoiding reading books
- If children are having problems with their self-esteem

When to refer

All children with learning difficulties should be seen by a paediatrician. Sometimes multiple factors are contributing to difficulties and a child may have more than one diagnosis. It's also important to consider if there may be an underlying condition, such as, autism spectrum or an underlying genetic cause.



Dr. Edwina Montgomery
 Developmental
 & General Paediatrician



Dr. Jeremy Rajanayagam
 Paediatric
 Gastroenterologist
 & Hepatologist



Sarah Ashley-Jones
 Paediatric Dietitian

Q: What do elves
 learn at school?

A: The elf-abet!

What can be done to support a Pediatricians' assessment?

Before seeing a paediatrician it is helpful if children have had a hearing test and their vision checked to see if there are any modifiable problems that can be treated. Schools may also perform cognitive and speech assessments to see if students are eligible for any schooling support.

Often children experiencing these difficulties will be aware that they are not achieving at the same level as their peers. This may result in feelings of hopelessness and reduced self-esteem. It is important to foster emotional resilience in these children and identify activities where they feel that they have some strengths.

How to maintain a healthy bowel habit in school?

Avoiding constipation is about adopting healthy bowel habits, a good diet and when necessary using stool softeners.

Healthy Bowel Habits

Children commonly confess to avoiding the school bathrooms for reasons including, "no privacy", "not enough time", "it's dirty" and "they don't have the right kind of toilet paper". Parents need to prepare children for school toilets by reassuring them about the environment. It's important to encourage children to regularly sit on the toilet even while at school, often 20-30minutes after a meal with 3-5minutes of trying to push.

In certain circumstances, it may be advisable for parents to accompany their child to their first school toilet visit so that home habits may be reinforced. It can sometimes be very hard to get a child to sit on the toilet, especially if they are fearful and are holding on. In these circumstances, behavioural strategies (reward/ sticker charts) initially commenced at home can be continued by the school teacher or nurse. If problems persist it may be useful to speak to a paediatrician.

Diet

It is important for children to be active and maintain a balanced diet particularly, **two to three serves of fruit or vegetables per day along with adequate fluids**. Increasing soluble fibre in a child's diet can also help and this can be achieved by adding foods such as, oat bran, psyllium, apples or blueberries into cereals or yoghurts.

Lunchbox Ideas

- **Fresh fruit such as apples, bananas, strawberries, mandarins, or oranges cut into quarters**
- **A serve of dairy, such as yoghurt, cheese, or milk**
- **Crackers and a dip such as hommus or avocado**
- **Vegetables, such as tomatoes, cucumber, carrot sticks or celery**
- **A wholemeal or grain sandwich containing meat and salad**
- **Water in a drink bottle**

Updates:

- Offspring is pleased to offer BCG vaccination in our new Child & Family travel clinic lead by Dr Shidan Tosif.
- Leorah Kagan will be facilitating weekend groups known as "Rainbow Tribe" which addresses social skills, emotional regulation and anxiety for kids.
- Offspring would like to welcome Carly Veness (Speech Pathologist - Feeding); Maria Kouspos (Speech Pathologist - Language & Development) and Dr Nisha Brown (Neonatal and Paediatric Occupational Therapist) to our team.



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