Back to school tips

You may be ready with a backpack and school supplies, but have you remembered to get groceries for a healthy lunch and snacks? Are you worried about your child suffering the back-to-school blues? Going back to school can be overwhelming for both a child and yourself.



Relieve back to school stress with these helpful tips:

Remember to pack a nutritious lunch that includes all of the food groups which can help build strength and reduce stress.

Contact the school to learn about its food policies so you can be prepared when packing a lunch. Is the school a nut-free zone? If so, choose from high-protein substitutes for peanut butter, such as tuna, chicken, turkey or cheese sandwiches. If your child lunches at the school cafeteria, why not review nutrition tips to help him/her choose what's best?

If back-to-school blues are a concern, **give your child a smile by surprising him/her with a note or drawing that you've packed in a lunchbox** or slipped in a backpack. Keep the lines of communication open about how he/she is feeling about school. Instead of asking 'What did you do at school today?", how about:

- How do you feel about the work you do?
- Is there someone in your class you feel close to?
- Are you comfortable asking questions?
- What are you most proud of today?

Backpacks are handy for transporting work and lunches back and forth to school, but when they're too heavy, it puts stress on muscles and can pose a health and safety risk. Some tips:

- The weight of the backpack should not exceed more than 15 per cent of the child's total body weight.
- Do not use backpacks or athletic bags with only one strap.
- Straps should be padded.
- Children should wear both straps on their shoulders to distribute weight evenly.

Enlist your child's participation in planning the night before. Allow them to have choices so that they feel involved in (and accountable for) getting to school ready, and on time. They can choose the clothes they want to wear and lay them out; gather what's to go in their backpack; check on the weather; plan the breakfast menu. These are real time-savers in the morning, especially when emotions may be heightened.

After a long summer off, the first few weeks back in a regular routine can be stressful. Both you and your child may need extra time in the morning, as well as extra rest, nutrition and support to adjust to the change. **Remember to plan for time to relax together as a family.**

If your child is feeling anxious about leaving you, acknowledge his/her feelings. It will help to be clear and direct about when you will see each other and what you expect to do at that time. Let your child know that you have trust in the teacher and the school. Suggest what they can do if they are upset (i.e., tell the teacher, call at lunchtime, etc.) If you are concerned about your child's level of anxiety, discuss solutions with the child's teacher—many are experts in dealing with separation.

Following these tips can help both you and your child feel prepared for the upcoming school year and get excited about the numerous activities and events to come.