

A Newsletter for Parents

Fall 2022



The Parent Line

Managing School Avoidance

It is time for a new academic school year and time to master that routine of getting your child back to school and being punctual. However, with the stress and anxieties of a new school year, you may find your child having school avoidance. This is not uncommon, and they may completely refuse or create reasons why they should not go to school.

They may complain of not feeling well, with unclear and unexplainable symptoms. Some may also have anxiety-related symptoms, in which they have no conscious control; like having stomachaches, nausea, dizziness, headaches, or even hyperventilation. These symptoms are more likely to occur on school days and are absent by the weekend. Since the type of symptoms they complain of can be caused by a physical illness, your child should get a medical examination.



- Talk and discuss with others about your child's school avoidance with the school staff. This would include their teacher, counselor, principal, and school nurse. Share your plans for your child's return to school and ask for their support and assistance.

So, the first step to managing school avoidance involves an examination by a primary care doctor who can distinguish for physical illness. Once physical illness has been ruled out as a cause of the symptoms, parents should focus on understanding what pressures the child is facing and getting them back to school as soon as possible.



Here are a few tips you can follow to help manage school avoidance:

- Talk and listen empathically to your child about the reasons why they do not want to go to school. Be understanding, supportive, and sympathetic of why they are upset, and avoid lecturing. Try to resolve any stressful situations they identify as causing worries or symptoms.

- Reassure them that you understand their concerns but insist on their return to school. Give them confidence that they can conquer their problems, let them know they are not alone in how they feel, and the safety reassurance in knowing that you will be there to help them through it.
- Be extra firm on school mornings and make a commitment to it. Set attendance goals with your child and track your child's attendance on a calendar.
- Ensure your child gets a good night's sleep. Most young children need 10-12 hours per night, and teens need around 8-10 hours per night.
- If your child does stay at home, be sure they are safe and comfortable, but do not give them any special treatment. Their symptoms should be treated with consideration and understanding.



For more information on this topic, or other parenting support, please contact The Parent Line at (808) 526-1222 or toll-free at 1-800-816-1222.

Special Dates to Remember

August is National Back to School Month!

August 12 - International

Youth Day

August 19, 2022 - Statehood Day



September 5, 2022 - Labor Day

September 6, 2022 - National

Read A Book Day

October is Safe Sleep and SIDS Awareness Month!

October 10, 2022 - Indigenous

Peoples' Day

October 31, 2022 - Halloween



Cooking with Young Children

Pumpkin Dip

Ingredients

- 8oz cream cheese (softened)
- 1 ½ cups powdered sugar
- 15oz can pumpkin puree
- 1 ½ teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
- 2 cups whipped topping (thawed)
- Apples or graham crackers for dipping



Directions

1. Place the cream cheese and powdered sugar in a bowl. Using a mixer, beat until smooth and fluffy.
2. Add the pumpkin puree and pumpkin pie spice, then beat until combined.
3. Gently fold in the whipped topping with a spatula. Spoon into a serving bowl and serve.



Spotlight on Safety

Backpacks



Time to carry all those school supplies and books for the new school year. Backpacks are a practical way for children of all ages to carry their necessities for the school day. When used properly, they are designed to distribute the weight load amongst some of the body's strongest muscles.

However, when they are too heavy or worn incorrectly, they can cause problems for children and teenagers. It may lead to injured muscles and joints which can cause severe back, neck, and shoulder pain, as well as posture problems too. So, how do we prevent our children from getting injured?

Here are some helpful tips:

- Ensure to use both shoulder straps. Wearing a backpack on one shoulder can strain muscles and may increase curvature of the spine.
- Watch the weight and pack light. A backpack should never weigh more than 10 to 20% of the child's total body weight.
- Utilize and organize items to use all the backpack compartments. Pack heavier items closest to the center of the back.
- Tighten the straps of the backpack so it is close to their body. The straps should hold at around two inches above their waist.

If your child or teenager has any pain or discomfort that may be caused by a heavy backpack, they should be checked by a health care provider and ask for further advice.



Suggested Readings

How to Help a Pumpkin Grow

By: Ashley Wolfe



We're Going on a Pumpkin Hunt

By: Goldie Hawk

In the Middle of Fall

By: Kevin Henkes

Halloween is Coming!

By: Cal Everett



List compiled by the Edna Allyn Room for Children at the Hawai'i State Library. Mahalo!