

Healthy Children

March 2018 Parent Newsletter

Children and Stress

For children, life can become overwhelming with schoolwork, family issues, friendships, extra-curricular activities and home responsibilities. As a result, children may start feeling stressed without recognizing or knowing how to cope.

Children have a hard time naming the emotions they are feeling. Often, they do not realize their physical symptoms can be related to stress.

Children haven't had enough experience to recognize how stress impacts their lives. As a parent you can help your child learn what stress is and how to recognize signs of stress.

Common signs of unhealthy stress for children include: eating too little, overeating, sleep problems, frequent headaches and stomachaches (even though a doctor has said they are physically healthy), irritability, emotional outbursts, excessive worry, fear of leaving parents and crying.

Noticing changes in your child's behaviours and describing them is important for opening conversations between you and your child [e.g. *I noticed you are not as excited about going to school as you used to be.*



(Provide a specific example: Yesterday when you came home you threw your book and looked mad, and this morning you said you didn't want to go to school). Has something upset you?]. This shows your care and support. Ask your children how they feel and listen to them to build trust. Help them name their emotions (sad, mad, scared) and identify what may be causing their stress. Teach and encourage them to take time for themselves. Being physically active, reading books, and spending time with friends and family are all examples of ways to reduce stress. Model healthy coping skills by: taking deep breaths when dealing with stressful situations, eating well and getting support when needed.

Articles

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Caffeinated Drinks and Children

People who are immunized don't just protect themselves; they also protect those who cannot be immunized. This is sometimes called herd immunity. By immunizing yourselves and your children, you help make the community healthier. For more information visit <http://immunizealberta.ca/should-i-immunize-my-child/all-about-immunity>



Caffeinated Drinks and Children

Are your children asking for caffeinated drinks? Is it common to have cola, coffee or tea available for your children at home? If so, your children may be getting more caffeine than you realize.

Children who consume too much caffeine may experience:

- Problems sleeping
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Faster heart rate

Health Canada recommends that caffeine be limited to the amount below:

Age (years)	Maximum Daily Caffeine Intake (mg)
4–6	45
7–9	62.5
10–12	85

Caffeine Content of Common Drinks

Drink	Drink Size	Average Caffeine (mg)
Coffee, brewed	8 oz (250ml)	100–150mg
Energy Drink	1 can (473ml)	80–180mg
Iced Coffee	8 oz (250ml)	55–80mg
Tea, brewed	8 oz (250ml)	50
Cola	1 can (355ml)	30

Be aware of which drinks have caffeine and limit offering these to your children. Caffeine can be present in many forms in drinks. When you see these words on a drink label, it means that the item contains caffeine:

- Black tea
- Cocoa/chocolate
- Caffeine
- Guarana
- Green tea
- Yerba Mate

Caffeine is found in drinks such as coffee-based drinks, tea, cola, iced tea, pop and energy drinks.

Many drinks containing caffeine are also high in sugar and low in nutrients. These drinks may replace healthier drinks such as water or milk. Encourage children to drink more water.

Send a refillable water bottle with your child to school or activities. Serve milk with meals.



➤ For more information on healthy drink choices for children visit healthyeatingstartshere.ca, click on “Healthy Drinks, Healthy Kids”.

➤ For more information on caffeinated drinks visit raisingourhealthykids.com, and click on “Caffeinated Beverages”.