

PRESS RELEASE
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Healthy Kids Back to School Tips

Well it's that time again. Time to prepare our children for another school year. As the excitement builds and plans are made for school uniforms, books, pens and pencils, it is also very important to plan for a healthy start to the school year. Our specially trained physical therapists at Major Changes Rehab Centre provide a few Healthy Kids Back to School Tips to kick-start the school year.

Hydration.

Our beautiful Bahamas is well known for sun, sand and sea and we should be aware of the effects that sun in particular may have on our children and young athletes. Staying hydrated is our first tip as the results of dehydration include nausea, dizziness, fatigue, muscles cramps and in very extreme causes may even led to death.

Hydration tips:

- Hydrate before, during and after strenuous exercise.
- Have students drink 16-20oz of water at least two hours before moderate – intense exercise in the heat.
- Have students to drink frequently throughout the day, especially 8-12oz of water 15 minutes before exposure to the heat.
- Monitor urine colour. Very pale to light yellow urine is ideal, however, anything darker may be an indication of dehydration and should be addressed.
- Pack a water bottle or foods such filled with water such as grapes, oranges, watermelons or tomatoes for snacks.

Sleep.

A good night's rest allows students to awaken refreshed and ready for the new school day. Research shows that school-aged children should sleep for 10–11 hours per night, teenaged children should sleep for 8–9 hours and adults 7–8 hours. Preparing students to transition from long summer days and nights to returning to an appropriate bedtime schedule for school can be taxing. Our second tip encourages parents to ease students back into a bedtime schedule early noting that it typically can take anywhere from 5-10 days to become adjusted to a new sleep schedule. Gradually moving your child's

bedtime earlier by 15 minutes until you arrive at the desired bedtime schedule will work wonders and is far better than trying to adjust the night before.

Backpack Safety.

Nowadays there are more books than ever and backpacks are an essential item for back to school gear. They are functional and are often used as a fashion accessory as well. Unfortunately, the incorrect use of the backpack or carrying one that is too heavy can cause lower back pain, discomfort, fatigue and muscle pain. Our third tip focuses on best practices for backpacks:

- Always select a backpack that is the correct size, weighing no more than 10% of the child's body weight. If the backpack is still too heavy for the child, consider a book bag on wheels.
- Make sure the height of the backpack extends from approximately 2 inches below the shoulder blades to waist level, or slightly above the waist.
- Focus on the straps, choosing bags with wide, well-padded straps to distribute the weight.
- Both straps are there for a reason. Encourage your child to wear both to distribute the weight.
- Distribute weight evenly loading heaviest items closest to the back and balancing materials to assist with good posture.
- Skip the leather and opt for lightweight, durable fabrics that do not add to the overall weight.
- Backpacks with compartments assist with organizing and reducing clutter.
- Pack a separate lunchbox.
- Use online resources, as there are textbook chapters available for iPad or Kindle.
- Clean out the backpack often, removing unnecessary items.

Posture.

Good posture has great long-term benefits for children. It encourages concentration and learning while poor posture leads to increased strain on the body and muscle aches. Our fourth tip encourages good posture and a healthy spine by allowing students to practice the following:

- While sitting at a desk feet flat on the floor.
- Thighs parallel to the floor with knees at a 90-degree angle.
- Keep neck and shoulders relaxed.
- Back straight.
- Situate wrists at a neutral angle.
- Body facing desk squarely for even weight distribution.

Students should also avoid sitting for very long periods without getting up to stretch legs. Students in class for long periods may straighten legs periodically, roll heads and stretch arms and shoulders to relax muscles and promote circulation.

Major Changes Rehab Centre is a comprehensive physical therapy and rehabilitation clinic in Nassau, Bahamas.

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