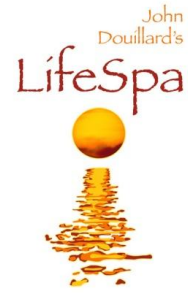


Five Back To School Health Tips Every Parent Must Know

Dr. John Douillard



As we prepare our kids for going back to school, many Moms and Dads are remembering the near record breaking number of childhood colds and flues reported in the past years. More and more parents are asking the question, “How can I prevent this and keep my kids healthy this year?” The remedy for avoiding colds and flues is actually very simple. It starts weeks, months and even a season or two before the dreaded cold and flu season hits. Let’s start with a look at what makes our kids susceptible to an infection in the first place. There always two factors in this cold-causing process. The first is the *exposure* to the bacteria or virus. For all practical purposes there is nothing we can really do to prevent our kids from being exposed. In a classroom or school cafeteria every child will be exposed to every bug – but only a small percentage will typically get sick – why? The second reason for an infection is called *susceptibility*. Keeping your child’s immunity strong enough so they do not succumb to the ever present infectious bugs in the first place is the goal. It is here that parents can keep their children healthy, in school and out of the doctor’s office.

On average, school age kids in America experience eight to ten colds a year, according to *The Children’s Hospital Guide to Your Child’s Health and Development*. With six kids in our family under the age of nineteen, we have no choice but to keep our kids cold and flu free. If my kids just got six colds a year, well under the national average – and each cold lasted ten days that would be 360 days a year with at least one sick kid in the house. Assuming Mom and Dad never get sick, we would enjoy a whopping 5 days of good family health a year. Over the years, based on a 5000 year old time tested medical system called Ayurveda, I have streamlined five basic health tips from my book, *Perfect Health For Kids*. These tips are designed to help kids stay healthy in the first place. If they do get sick it will be only for a day or two rather than a week or two.

Tip One - Back To School Days

During these first weeks of school, the exposure to cold-causing bugs is certainly higher. What is also happening in early fall is the days are getting shorter and the nights are getting colder. Cold autumn nights bring hints of winter with dry and cool air. Night heaters may dry the air even more and soon the mucus membranes in the sinuses dry out. When this happens the respiratory mucus membranes produce large amounts of reactive mucus due to the dryness. Seasonal pollens and pollutants can also act as irritants to the sinuses which can cause excess mucus production. As excess mucus is produced, this provides the perfect breeding ground for a viral or bacterial infection. Most cold remedies like Sudafed or antihistamines will attempt to dry out the reactive mucus in the sinuses and thus make the cause of the infection worse.

Tip: Keep sinuses moist with cool mist humidifiers at night during those early back-to-school days and keep them running right through the winter. Your local natural food store carries a variety of ear oil products.

Ear oil is a required cold remedy that has long fallen out of fashion. It is an absolute must in my house. Preventively, from September to March I will drop warm ear oil in my kid's ears while they sleep twice a month. If they catch a cold, I will use garlic-based ear oil twice a day until they are well – usually a day or two. This again keeps the ears and Eustachian tubes well lubricated, moist and infection free.

Tip Two – Early To Bed

One of the most difficult parenting tools for Moms and Dads is to get their kids to bed early. When one of my children get sick, I can usually track it to lots of staying up late, school stress and excessive after-school activities that just wear them out. Pre high school kids should be in bed by eight o'clock. For high school kids, lights should be out by ten. This may sound difficult, but if a child is up past these hours on a regular basis, they will wake up fatigued and soon, when the stress mounts, their immunity will suffer. If you like botanical remedies – I use an herb called ashwaganda, which means “the strength of ten horses.” It is a great and very safe adaptogen for kids. It can give them energy during the day and at the same time, if taken before bed, it can ensure a deep restful night sleep. It is not a stimulant, nor a sedative – it is a true rejuvenative that can help a child weather a stressful time.

Tip Three – Stay Hydrated

In 1850 the average American drank one can of soda per year. Today, kids drink two–three cans of pop per day. Cokes, as well as any caffeinated beverage, will actually dehydrate the body. So to avoid dehydration, a kid must drink one 12 ounce glass of water to offset the dehydrating effects of each 12 ounce caffeinated pop. Early dehydration in kids can cause stomach aches, bones loss, hormonal problems, obesity, fatigue, mood swings, poor focus ability, skin conditions and much more. An average person can lose two-three quarts a day of water through non-exertion. With exercise, a child can lose twice that amount. A rule of thumb is that a child or adult should drink one-half their body weight in ounces per day to avoid dehydration. For kids in sports, a 2% loss in body weight due to perspiration creates a 25% loss of their athletic ability. Put water bottles in your kid's lunch – not high fructose corn syrup juice boxes. Have them drink a large 8-12 ounce glass of plain water every morning and evening and give them water with lunch. A report in the Lancet said that these sugary drinks increase the risk of obesity by 60%.

Tip Four – Colds Start In the Digestive System

I often ask my kid patients how often they move their bowels. I usually get a blank stare. They have no idea – their parents have no idea. When I tell them at least once a day, first thing in the morning, is normal – they often tell me they go 1-2 times a week. Parents have to help their kids track their elimination and know what is normal. If they know what is normal – they can be educated to tell the parent that their elimination is off. Late dinners and travel are the big offenders of a good digestion and compromised immunity. If sluggish bowels are a concern, try an herb called trifala. This bowel muscle tonifier which helps the intestinal wall function and eliminate without the use of habit forming laxatives. Trikatu is a great herb to offset those late pizza dinners at 8 or 9 PM. This herb helps to stimulate the digestion so the heavy meal will not sit there and cause one to miss their morning bowel movement. This cycle of regularity is paramount to long term good health. For more information, see the remedies and articles at www.LifeSpa.com.

Tip Five – Controlling Moods and Focus

Studies have shown that muscles are stronger in the morning when they were typically needed to work the farm before the midday heat. Midday represents the best time to eat the largest meal of the day. This is when the body can digest a meal most efficiently. In the afternoon, when American is craving chocolate and coffee, the brain is demanding the lion's share of the available blood sugar. If lunch was only a cookie (a common lunchtime meal), then the blood sugar will crash every afternoon. This is why kids are ravenous when they come home from school. If possible, leave a good healthy meal for them when they get home and try to not just give them a sugary snack at this time. This will only start the high/low roller coaster of the moods and blood sugar. This is also step one on the weight balancing program. In our study based on my book, *The 3-Season Diet*, we did a study where 50 subjects ate three meals a day. Breakfast was big enough to get to lunch without craving or snacking. Lunch was a large and relaxed meal – the biggest of the day - and supper was smaller and before 6PM. They lost 1.3 pounds per week and we measured anxiety, fatigue, depression, cravings, insomnia and general well being. In our study, after two weeks, each of these conditions was significantly improved.

When the blood sugar in the afternoon is unstable, the body will become stressed, moody, overweight and depressed. When a child is then asked to focus in school it is next to impossible. Soon they become labeled with ADD or ADHD. Much of this condition and the cause of this condition can be remedied with these lifestyle modifications. In addition to the lifestyle I often recommend an herb called Bacopa for memory, ADD and focus concerns with kids. Bacopa is not a stimulant but it does increase the cerebral circulation, therefore allowing the brain to access its own receptor sites for better mood, focus and memory.