

Kids have stress too!®

Adults aren't the only ones who feel stressed. Kids do too.

Some stress is normal.

Too much stress is not good for children – or adults!

Stress in children shows up in many ways.

They may say that they have headaches, or that their tummy hurts, or that they don't feel well. They may seem sad or panicky. They might get angry more easily. Stressed kids may start fights. Children who are too young to talk about feelings may cry or whine a lot.



They may act differently than they usually do.

Kids may have trouble sleeping or find it hard to relax. They may want to eat more often, or find it difficult to eat at all. Some kids become quieter and do not seem to care about the things they usually like to do. They may not want to go to school. Sometimes they have trouble getting along with their family or their friends. Some children won't show their stress. Other children might show stress by behaving badly.



Kids say their stress comes from many different things.

- Change is difficult for children. Moving to a new home or school can cause stress. Starting school for the first time can be hard too.
- Having too much to do is stressful. Kids need some quiet time.
- Feeling different from other kids is very stressful. Being teased or bullied is too.
- Fighting or arguing among family members is stressful. Not getting along well with brothers or sisters causes stress.
- Having trouble with schoolwork can be another cause of stress.
- Being yelled at by family, friends or teachers is very stressful for kids.
- If families break-up children can feel stress that lasts for a long time.
- But most of all, it is stressful when kids feel lonely and unloved.

stress

How can you help your kids when they feel stressed?

Spending time with your kids is the most important thing you can do. Listen to them when they talk to you. Try to understand how they feel.

We all need love and affection. Show your children that you love them, with words, hugs, and kisses.

Do things with your children. It will help them to feel that they belong in the family.

There are lots of things you can do as a family. Exercise is a great way to burn off stress. So make exercise part of your family life. Play ball or other games. Go for walks. Eat meals together. Talk. Share ideas, fun, and how you feel about things.

Kids also need time to themselves – just to relax and do nothing!

Sometimes the best cure for stress is just to have some quiet time. Kids need some time on their own. Listening to music, reading, or playing quietly may help them feel better. Doing nothing is fine too!



help

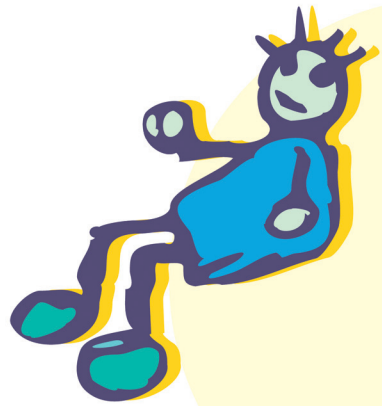
There are ways that you can help.

- If you think your kids are feeling stressed – ask them.
- First they will need to calm down so that they can think more clearly. Taking a few deep breaths will help them to relax.
- Ask them how they feel, and why they think they feel that way.
- Next ask them how big the problem is. Listen carefully to what they have to say.
- Help them choose what to do next. Later you can ask if it helped.



You can teach your child to deep breathe

Help children calm down by teaching them to take a few deep breaths. Even young children can relax this way. Ask her to sit quietly, or lie down, and close her eyes. Ask her to imagine she has a balloon on her belly button. Place your hand over her belly button. Tell her to breathe in slowly and imagine the balloon filling with air. You count to four while she does this. After four she can breathe out slowly – letting the air out of the balloon. Repeat breathing in and out slowly five times. With practice she will be able to do this on her own. It will help her relax and stay calm. You can try it too!

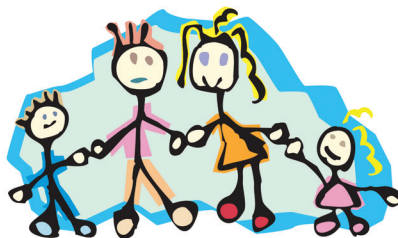


relax



Here are some ways to build a less stressful home

- Make sure your child gets exercise and time to play.
- Healthy food can help the body cope with stress more easily.
- Spend time with your children and ask them how they feel.
- Hugs and kisses show kids you love them and make them feel good.
- Bedtime routines help kids relax at the end of the day.
- Sleep is important. A tired child gets stressed more easily.
- Morning routines get the day off to a good start.
- Have fun together. A good laugh helps fight off stress.
- Learn to manage your stress.



The good news is...

Even very young children can learn to manage their own stress.

The younger they learn the better!

These activities will help them for the rest of their lives.

For more information about stress in children visit our web site at www.kidshavestresstoo.org

Kids Have Stress Too!® is a program of The Psychology Foundation of Canada.



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How to Help Kids Handle Stress



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