

## NMH Encourages A Healthy Start for “Back to School”

Can you believe it’s already August? As the first day of school draws near and summer fun starts to fade, a renewed focus on routine and healthy habits come to the forefront. This year, Dr. Taylor, M.D., Director of NMH Emergency Department and Urgent Care Clinic, hopes a little early preparation will help you start the school year off on a healthy foot.

### **Rest up for better learning**

During the summer, children and teens tend to go to bed later and sleep in. Their body clocks need to adjust to the earlier wake-up times for school. Now is a good time to start.

For grade school students, experts recommend an average of 10 to 11 hours of sleep each night. Teens likewise need about 8 to 10 hours of sleep each night to function best. To ease the transition back to a normal bedtime, Dr. Taylor, M.D. recommends inching your routine back by 15-30 minutes each night over the course of seven to 10 days. By keeping a regular bedtime – even on weekends – your child will be less likely to slip into sleep deprivation.

Dr. Taylor, M.D. also recommends keeping electronics out of the bedroom. Using electronics before bed leads to poor quality sleep as well as less sleep. A relaxing, age appropriate bedtime routine can help kids wind down.

### **Easing back-to-school anxiety**

The transition back to class as summer ends can be a stressful time for children and parents alike.

“It is normal for children and their parents to feel some anxiety when heading back to school,” says Dr. Taylor, M.D. But you can ease those nerves and anxious feelings several ways:

- A week or two before school, start preparing children for the upcoming transition by getting back to school year routines, such as a realistic bedtime and your morning routine.
- Visit the school before the school year begins. This is a great opportunity for kids of all school ages to get acquainted with the school and the teachers, which can help ease some back to school anxiety.
- Talk about situations that could cause stress like homework, making friends, encountering older kids and encounters with strangers.
- Validate the child’s worry by acknowledging that, like any new activity, starting school can be hard but soon becomes easy and fun.

## **Avoiding back-to-school illness**

Despite our greatest efforts, it's not uncommon for kids to get sick at the start of a new school year.

“Back-to-school time is an excellent time for parents to make sure their children have had an annual physical and are up to date on vaccines,” says Dr. Taylor, M.D.

Aside from making sure your child is up to date on vaccinations, the next most important way to prevent illness is to teach your child good hand hygiene. The Centers for Disease Control recommends the following:

- Wet hands.
- Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap.
- Rub and scrub for 20 seconds (about the time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” two times – silently of course!).
- Dry hands with a clean towel.

When washing with soap and water won't work, hand sanitizer is a good alternative. It's also a good idea to remind them not to drink or eat after one another.

With a little planning, a good routine, adequate sleep and illness prevention, your child will be ready to learn.

We wish you all the best for this upcoming school year! We also know that illnesses and injuries don't follow a convenient schedule. We hope that you won't need us, but if you do then Newman Memorial Hospital's Urgent Care Clinic is available without an appointment and with extended evening and weekend hours! Happy “Back to School”!