

ASK THE DOC



Dr. Shama Faheem is the Chief Medical Officer for the Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network.

Back to School Stress



As the last weeks of summer vacation ended, there is a mixed sense of excitement, nervousness, and stress for both parents and children.

Safety in the mist of ongoing COVID: Parents and children are hoping the return to the classroom will feel as normal as possible with COVID-19 still being prevalent. What is different this year is that vaccines for the coronavirus are now available for all children 6 months and older and more than 13.8 million children have had the virus since the start of the pandemic, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Public health experts agree that vaccinating children is the most important thing to do.

Handling Homework: Start having discussions around homework. Talk about what it is, when it is due and help them devise a plan of how to get the work done. You can set small tasks for each night. Learning to manage their workload efficiently will help them, not only succeed in school, but in the workforce later in life. For older children, set a plan or schedule in place, perhaps at the beginning of each week.

Create Consistent Routines: Before and as the school year begins, plan the weekly a.m. and p.m. routine and do your best to keep to it. Of course, situations will arise that will get you off track, but do your best to restart the routine as soon as possible. Each weekend, spend some time gathering your thoughts and plans for the week ahead. Consistency and boundaries can help ease some worry and stress.

Set House Rules Around Screens: Nearly all children and adolescents tend to increase screen time during vacations. When school starts, some children struggle with being away from their electronics and miss being on screen which can make them feel sad or more irritable. This can affect their functioning at school. Every parent needs to decide what works best but every family should have house rules around screen times. As school starts, set screen-free times of the day. While there is value in technology, it is essential to balance screen time against the importance of spending time with real people, in real places, and doing real things.



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September 7, 2022

COVID-19 and Mental Health

Listen, Understand & Watch: Most adults know when they are feeling anxious or stressed. It is important as a parent to recognize the signs of stress in teens and children. Common signals can include difficulty sleeping, headaches, stomach aches, and changes in behavior (irritability and temper tantrums). The first step in helping your child with school stress is to really listen to what's going on with them. You can begin conversations casually. If your child isn't sharing their thoughts verbally, watch for non-verbal cues, or trust your instincts if your kid just doesn't seem to be themselves. Acknowledge that worries are real and meaningful to your child. Offering reassurance seems like it might be helpful, but you risk coming across as invalidating and could result in your child keeping quiet. A safer course is to start by seeking to understand and validate. Often that is enough and will help your child feel better. Think together about ways to reduce their anxiety. Once you feel you understand their worry, ask them how you can help and what they might be able to do to help themselves. This demonstrates respect for your child, puts them in control, and gives them practice with problem-solving. Ask if there are things that you can do to help. Ask permission. If you feel like you have advice that you think will be helpful, ask permission first. If your child agrees, then share. If they say no, then respect their wishes and stay quiet. Make sure you support your child in getting back to school. Some well-intentioned parents sometimes try to help their children feel better by letting them avoid the thing that is stressing them—in this case, school. This can actually backfire and make the situation worse. For most kids, back-to-school jitters subside a few days after they get back into the routine of school. Seek professional help if things don't get better. Some children and youth with anxiety may need a professional or specialist to help them feel better.

Mental Health Help:

- Behavioral health – which includes mental health, substance use, and more – is a key part of your overall well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic has left many people feeling anxious or depressed. The DWIHN website offers a free and anonymous assessment to help you determine if you or someone you care about should connect with a behavioral health professional.
<https://screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/DWHN>
- Another excellent digital tool to support mental health is myStrength, an app with web and mobile tools designed to support your goals and wellbeing. myStrength's highly interactive, individually-tailored resources allow users to address depression, anxiety, stress, substance use, chronic pain, and sleep challenges, while also supporting the physical and spiritual aspects of whole-person health. Visit the DWIHN website to learn more.
- For school mental health resources during trauma and violence, visit, <https://dwhn.org/news-oxford-hs-grief-counseling-resources>

COVID-19 DASHBOARD

Wayne County:

First dose given: 764,797 (70.9%)
Two doses given: 700,062 (64.9%)

City of Detroit:

First dose given: 318,389 (47.5%)
Two doses given: 270,895 (40.4 %)

Michigan case fatality rate: 1.4%

Wayne County fatality rate: 1.4%

Detroit Case fatality rate: 2.3%

Vaccination Dashboard

1st dose tracker: 68%
Michigan (5 years and older)
First dose given: 6,327,108 (63.4%)
Two doses given: 5,817,229 (58.2%)

As of 9/7/2022

Michigan Confirmed Cases
2,399,55
Michigan COVID-19 Deaths
34,750

Wayne County Cases
(excluding Detroit): 296,838

Wayne County Deaths
(excluding Detroit): 4,270

Detroit City Cases: 146,341

Detroit City Deaths: 3,420

You can submit COVID-19 related questions to: AskTheDoc@dwhn.org