

School Absences: What You Should Know

Why do some children miss a lot of school?

Some children miss school for medical reasons. But children who miss a lot of school often don't have health problems.

Some reasons include:

- Not having a way to get to school
- Being bullied or not feeling safe at school
- Having to take care of sick family members
- Anxiety or depression

Why is missing school a problem?

Children don't do well in school if they're not there. Students who miss a lot of school can have problems learning and making friends. They may drop out of school and not go to college. They may earn less money as adults, miss more work, and be less healthy than people who went to school regularly.

My child has a health problem that makes him miss school. What should I do?

Ask your child's doctor to give the school a written plan. Let the school nurse and your child's teacher know how they can help. If your child has a serious illness, going to

school part-time is better than being absent. If you know ahead of time that your child will need to miss school, make plans to return as soon as possible.

Talk to your child's doctor if you think your child might have behavior or mental health problems. Ask the school's guidance counselors what mental health or special education services are available.

My child misses school for other reasons. What should I do?

If you have concerns about food, money, or transportation, talk to your child's doctor and school guidance counselor. There may be programs available in your community to help.

How can I make sure my child goes to school regularly?

Talk to your child's doctor about school during check-ups. Set morning and bedtime routines, especially if your child did not attend preschool. Make sure your child gets to school on time every day. Keep track of how many days of school your child misses.

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <https://familydoctor.org>.

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How can I help my child feel safe at school?

If you think your child is being bullied or does not feel safe at school:

- Talk to the school principal, guidance counselor, and teachers.
- Consider contacting the police.
- Consider transferring your child to a new school instead of keeping him or her home.
- Talk to your doctor about mental health support for your child.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

Absences Add Up

<http://absencesaddup.org/importance-of-school-attendance/> and <https://vimeo.com/180046410>

Attendance Works

<http://www.attendanceworks.org>

National Parent Teacher Association

<http://www.ptaourchildren.org>

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