

# Back-to-School DAYS

## Easing the high school transition

Each school year brings new opportunities. Although attending a new school can involve some butterflies as kids acclimate to their new classmates and teachers, the transition from grade school to high school is typically one of the more dramatic transitions students have to make.

Although starting high school can be an overwhelming experience full of change, there are many ways for students to ease this transition.

- Take part in high school orientation. Orientations help students acclimate to their new surroundings. Orientation sessions can provide insight on coursework and help kids learn about the campus and any amenities it provides. Learning the layout of the school in advance can help calm any first-day jitters students may encounter.



Entering freshmen can take several steps to make their transition to high school easier.

- Arrive prepared. Make sure all summer assignments are completed so you start off on the right foot. Unprepared students are likely to be apprehensive.
- Adjust to new sleep-

wake schedules. Summer vacation may have been filled with late nights and sleepy mornings, but now that school will begin anew, it's time for students to gradually readjust their

schedules. That will make it easier to wake up for school. Many high schools begin the day earlier than grammar schools and middle schools. It may take a few weeks to grow accustomed to the

earlier hours, so start waking up earlier as the summer winds down.

- Plan to arrive with friends. Seeing familiar faces can help students feel more secure. High schools tend to be larger than grade schools and include kids from various neighborhoods, but chances are your friends will be attending the same school as you. Carpool with friends during the first week of school so your first steps on campus are with friends.

- Enroll in a mentoring program. Some high schools pair freshmen with upperclassmen so younger students can learn the ropes of the school. New students can benefit from these personalized guides and should feel comfortable asking questions about teachers and school protocol.

- Participate in clubs and extracurricular ac-

tivities. Another way to feel more comfortable at a new school is to participate in activities. High schools offer numerous extracurricular activities that cater to an array of interests. Band, choir, sports teams, debate teams, student government, and foreign language clubs are just a few examples of enjoyable extracurricular activities. Joining such groups can introduce you to like-minded students.

- Arrive to class on time. Teachers may be more lenient the first few weeks of school, but over time they will expect students to learn their schedules and arrive to class on time. Students can make arrangements with friends to share lockers or employ other strategies to make it easier to get to class on time.

## Injury prevention tips for school-aged athletes



The dawn of a new school year is an exciting for school-aged youngsters. Though many kids may not look forward to homework or getting up early, a new school year is often exciting for young athletes who long to get back on the playing fields and compete with their teammates.

As valuable and exciting as participating in team sports can be, they can just as easily prove dangerous for athletes who aren't prepared for the rigors of physical activity. A summer spent lounging poolside might be just what kids need after a long school year, but that relaxation can put youngsters in jeopardy of suffering an injury when they return to team sports in the fall. Many a young athlete has pulled a hamstring or suffered a shin splint when returning to athletic competition after a long layoff. But such injuries are largely preventable, and the following tips can help school-aged athletes ensure their return to competition is as painless as it is pleasurable.

- \* Condition your muscles in the weeks heading up to tryouts or the start of the school year. Many fall sports feature tryouts near the end of summer or at the very beginning of the school year. That means athletes must start conditioning their muscles early. Discuss with your parents, coaches and physicians which muscles you will be working when playing a particular sport. Adults should help you develop a conditioning program that gets the right muscle groups ready for the rigors of your sport. A properly conditioned athlete has a much lesser risk of injury than one who is not. Your offseason conditioning program should begin slowly and gradually grow more challenging as you draw closer to the school year.

- \* Stretch, stretch, stretch. Always stretch your muscles before any strenuous activities, whether it's an off-season conditioning program or an in-season competition. Stretching significantly reduces your risk of injury and can improve your perfor-

mance on the field.

- \* Get geared up. The right gear is essential for young athletes looking to avoid injury. Though summer might seem tailor-made for flip-flops, such footwear should never be worn when exercising and preparing for the coming sports season. Athletic shoes specific to your sport are made to provide the support you will need as you train and compete. The same goes for the clothing you should wear when getting ready for the season. Wear the appropriate athletic attire to reduce your risk of injury.

- \* Weight train in the presence of your coaches or parents. Many athletes begin weight training for the first time when they are in high school. Weight training can be beneficial to young athletes, but such athletes should never lift weights unsupervised. Parents, trainers and coaches can explain the equipment to young athletes while ensuring they don't overdo it in the weight room. Lifting too much weight or having bad form when weightlifting can cause serious injury that can sideline youngsters for the coming season, if not longer. So young athletes should always weight train in the presence of an adult and always work with a spotter to help them should they struggle to finish a repeti-

tion.

- \* Don't try to match your fellow athletes. The human body develops differently for everyone. Young athletes must recognize that there's a chance their classmates and teammates may be developing more quickly than they are. These classmates may be more capable of performing certain physical activities. For example, a teammate might be able to lift more weight than you. Do not try to match your

fellow athletes if your body is uncomfortable performing a certain exercise. If you must endure substantial pain to perform a given exercise, then your body is likely telling you it simply isn't ready for that exercise. Don't force the body to do something just to keep up with your teammates.

- \* Take a break. Even if you rested for most of summer, you still will need to rest when you begin getting ready for the upcoming

athletic season. Take at least one day off per week to allow your body to recover and recharge. Your body needs that recovery time to reduce its risk of injury.

School-aged athletes often look forward to a new school year as a chance to get back on the playing fields. But such athletes should emphasize safe training as the season draws closer.

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