



# Helping Your Child back to School after Lockdown

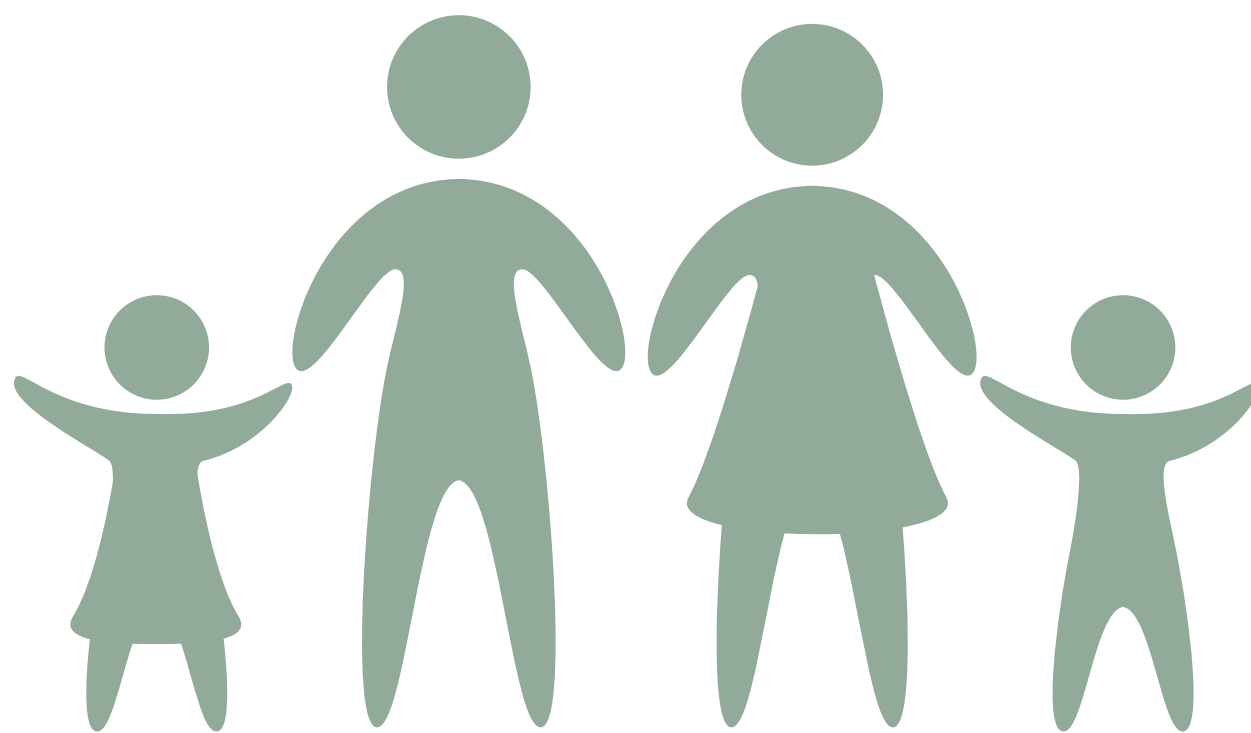
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# About this Booklet

Your child going back to school after lockdown is going to be a big change for both of you. Being together at home for a long time means that your family routines will have changed quite a bit. Some children will be worried about this change but some will also be excited. We hope this booklet will help you to plan for your child getting back to school, no matter what each school's plans may be.



**This booklet was created by Allied Health Professions (AHP) team in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) in NHS Grampian**

# Worries About Returning to School

Getting ready for going back to school will be a big change after such a long time off and so it is good to begin to think about how this can be managed. Worrying about this change is normal and quite often happens for a lot of children after the long summer holidays. It is important to hear what your child's worries are and this helps them to feel listened to.

You will know there is a lot of information in the media about what school might look like when it starts back. No-one will really know what the set up will be until much closer to opening time and this is so the latest guidance can be followed. Although the detail isn't known, there is still plenty you can do to start to plan for your child returning to school. The more planning you do, the less likely it is that your child will be overwhelmed with worries.

## **Here are some hints and tips to help you plan with your child:**

- Have an open conversation with your child when they are calm and relaxed about what returning to school might be like for them
- Think about how your child usually manages change and worries and use any strategies that have helped in the past
- Expect questions and allow time for these. Give answers as much as you can but it may also be helpful to think of options as possibilities, rather than for definites
- It will be helpful to prepare your child for the fact that the Coronavirus is sometimes unpredictable which means that some things may need to change even once schools are back. You can encourage them to learn that they have already coped with a very big change (lockdown with restrictions) and that you will support them through any other changes



# Be Prepared!

**There are lots of ways you can practically help your child prepare for returning to school. Some of you will have done this before at key transition times, such as starting P1.**

**Here are some ideas to think about:**

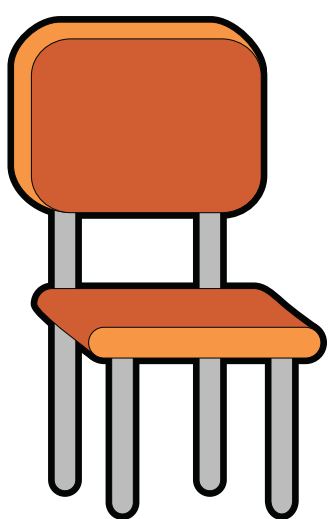
## Activities



Think about practicing a 'school day' routine a week or two before returning to school e.g. an activity in the morning before break, then another, lunch and some physical activity/outdoors, and an afternoon activity



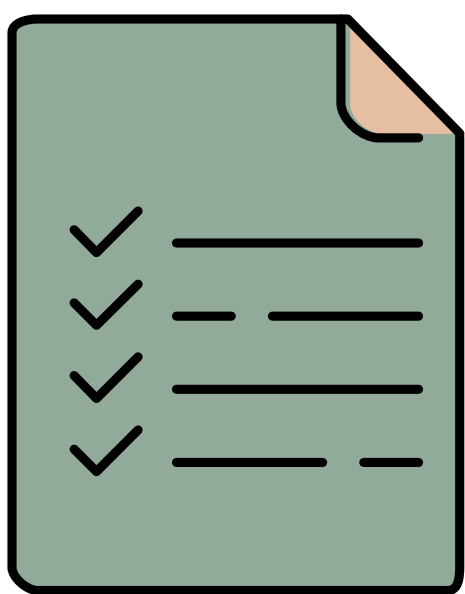
Practice and make lists together for what needs to be taken in their school bag each day and what needs to be taken out at the end of each day. Organise and start to use some of the school supplies your child will take to school e.g. backpack, lunchbox or pencil case



Practice sitting in one particular 'homework' area of your home to do some learning tasks. This will then be easier for those children who may continue with some time at home and school. Your child should sit in a firm upright chair, as they typically do at school, and this will also promote good posture



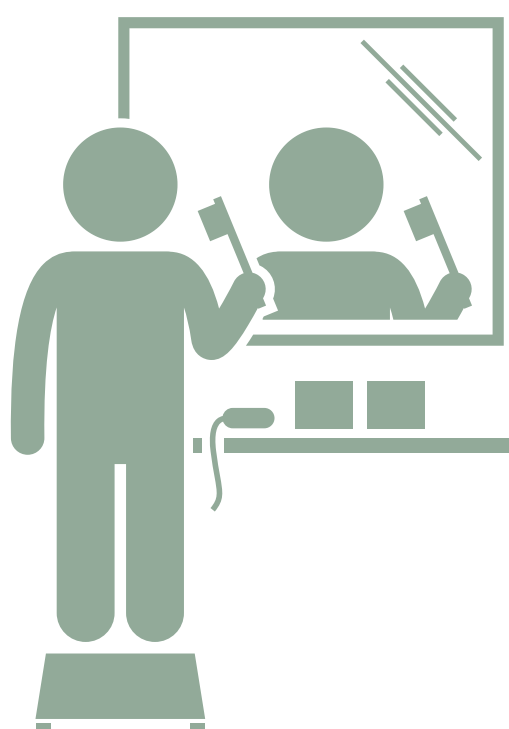
Have your child start to go to bed at a regular time with a regular bedtime routine. They should also practice getting up at a similar time each day to mimic what usually happens during the school week



Practice time limited tasks such as getting ready to get out of the door in the morning, getting ready for PE or eating a packed lunch during the lunch break time



Practice how to open/close/use a lunch box and water bottle if using these. Practice carrying a tray if getting school meals



Think about any tasks that your child used to do on their own but haven't been doing these during lockdown. Now is the time to encourage them to take on these tasks again.

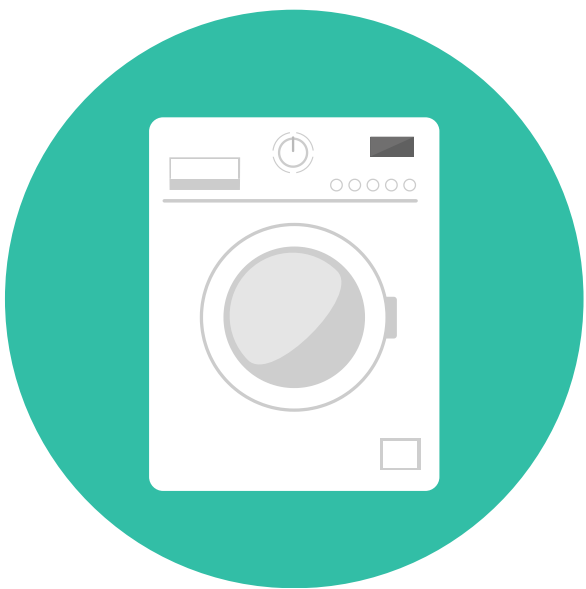


Get used to eating at set times again such as break and lunch times

# Clothes



Practice laying out all the clothes your child needs for the morning



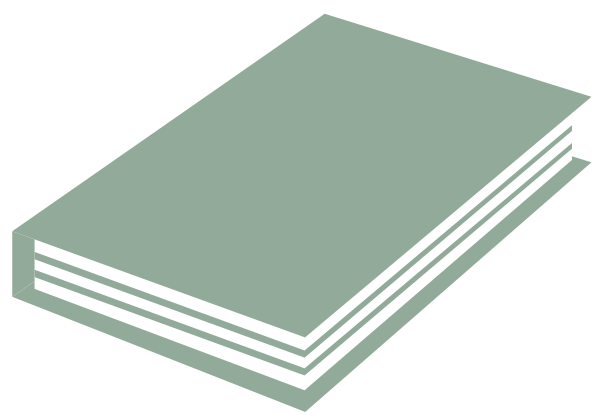
Practice getting dressed in the morning rather than staying in pyjamas, perhaps wearing a part of school uniform e.g. polo shirt. This gives a little visual reminder of a change in routine to come.

Washing uniforms several times often helps those children who are sensitive to the feel of new clothing.



Practicing putting on coats/jackets, shoes including doing up buttons, zips, and fastening laces or Velcro shoes. If they struggle with fiddly bits then perhaps you could consider using elastic shoe laces or adding a keyring onto zips so they are easier to grasp

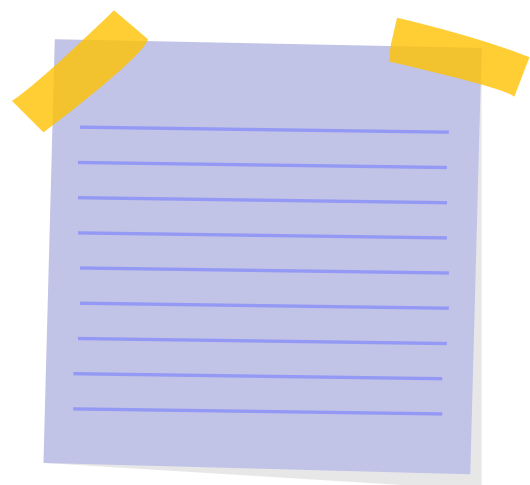
# Communication



Some children will want to start learning a bit about some subjects before school returns and others will not. Be guided by your child.



Practice your **'back up plan'**. Although the exact details about school returning will not be known yet, you can start to discuss with your child what your back up plan might be. This could be who they will speak to if they are feeling upset, worried, distressed at school. It might be where they will go if they feel this way or what activities they can do if they feel that way. It may help to write down the backup plan so your child can get familiar with this before school or have it with them at school.



Practice using ways that will help your child feel thought of and comforted when school returns e.g. leaving little notes in their backpack or pencil case or practicing drawing a heart on their palm so when they look at it, they know you are thinking about them and wishing them a good day at school.



If your child gets overwhelmed with worries then it would be good to practice any strategies that they find helpful whilst at home such as deep breathing, doing a favourite activity. It will be important to share this information with school as soon as possible too.



Think about the games and activities that your child enjoys playing with others. Will these be possible at the moment? Discuss this with your child and focus on how they can be adapted rather than stopped.



# Getting to and from School



Practice the walk to school at a similar time your child would usually take the walk



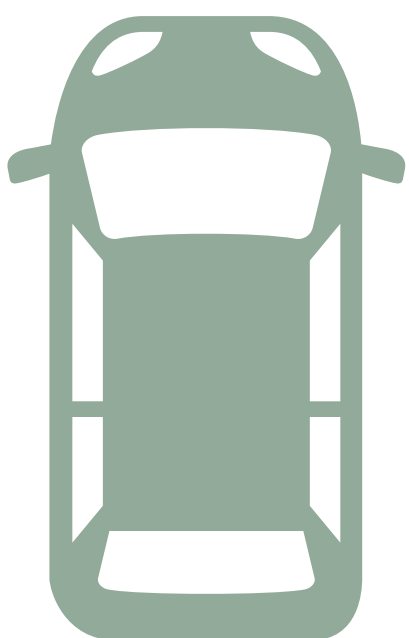
Practice being near your child's school. Walk or take the bus there and if the gates are open, have a wander around the grounds and chat to your child about what it might be like. This helps to build familiarity and confidence about their school environment.



Practice the school walk/journey with a backpack/bag to help to build familiarity with this feeling and build endurance for the walk

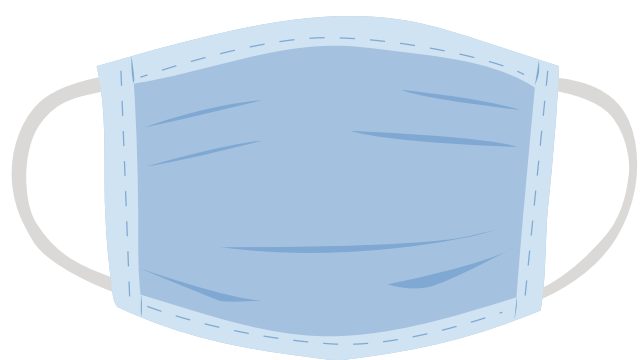


If your child is going to use a bus to school, get to know the timetable and practice the route if possible or at least some time on a bus



Practice (once you know the arrangements) where you will collect your child or where they should meet you. Parking arrangements may be different and exit routes from the school building may be different and require your child to get to know different routes.

# Covid-19 and Hygiene



Practice putting on a face covering/mask. Children old enough to wear one should be practiced in putting this on and off on their own. They should know where to keep it between uses and where to find their spare one, if needed



Practice washing hands. Soap and water. Practice washing and drying hands on their own.



Hand Sanitiser Gel: discuss with your child how to figure out if a dispenser holds soap or sanitiser and the difference. Practice using hand sanitiser and discuss the importance of it drying on hands before touching other surfaces. It can be tricky to figure out how much pressure to put on the pump of the bottle or how to open bottles so it's good to practice this before your child tries this in a busy place.



Practice using cleaning wipes and sprays as it is likely that your child will need to clean down some surfaces they have used in school in preparation for another child using them. You can practice cleaning their bit of the dinner table or a specific bit of a work top.

They could also practice cleaning their laptop etc. This will help them get used to the motion of cleaning and the smell of the cleaning products.

# Things to Ask

Getting children back to school might be different for different schools. We know that there might be a mix of children being at school and home. Schools are busy doing lots of planning for this and we won't know what your plan will be for a while yet.

See below some questions that might be helpful for you to ask when school contact you about your child returning:

How often will my child need to attend the school building?

How will I keep doing school work at home if my child is at home for some of the time?

How will my child get to school if they usually use a bus or taxi?

How will my child wash/sanitise their hands at school and how will they know when and where to do this?

Will my child be with other children and teachers they know for some of their school day?



Who can be a point of contact for my child and I if we have any worries or any questions?

What will the school environment look for my child? Can they provide a visual tour so your child can get familiar with any one way systems or floor markings etc.?

If my child is to learn at home some of the time, do I have everything I need to keep doing this safely, for example, any equipment they use at school that could be used at home?

# Communication

Communication is going to be important when your child returns to school. Here are some hints and tips about communication:

As mentioned above, find out who your main points of contact will be in school. These are:

.....

.....

It is helpful to have one key point of contact/advocate within school. This helps with communication when you only have to contact one person. This person is:

Name

.....

Phone

.....

# Communication

Here are some hints and tips about

## communication:

- Consider how your child will cope with the business of school again and how they will manage to hear and respond to questions with the noise of lots of other people in the background.
- Consider how your child likes to communicate and relay this information to key contacts at school.
- Your child may find it hard to tell you how they are feeling. You may find that their behaviour changes if they are finding school hard. Try to allow time for talking about their day when they get home from school, but try to avoid asking lots of questions. Sometimes doing an activity together e.g. a walk or colouring in together will help to get the conversation started.
- Using 'I wonder...' can also help children to talk a bit more. E.g 'I wonder if you got to play outside at school today..' or 'I wonder if Mrs.Smith thought it was noisy in school today?'
- If you feel your child is trying to say something but finding it hard, sometimes writing things down or drawing can help. In this case, sometimes offering a choice can also help. 'Was it X or was it Y'
- If your child is only in school some days of the week, the use of a calendar with the info written/drawn on each day can be a good visual reminder for them about what is happening on each day.
- If there is a list of things they need to take to school, a visual list of either words or pictures can help them remember these.
- If your child is finding it hard to speak to teachers, taking something they can show the teacher can help start a conversation as the teacher can comment on what they are seeing.
- A home/school communication book might be helpful for passing on information. This can be a simple notebook.



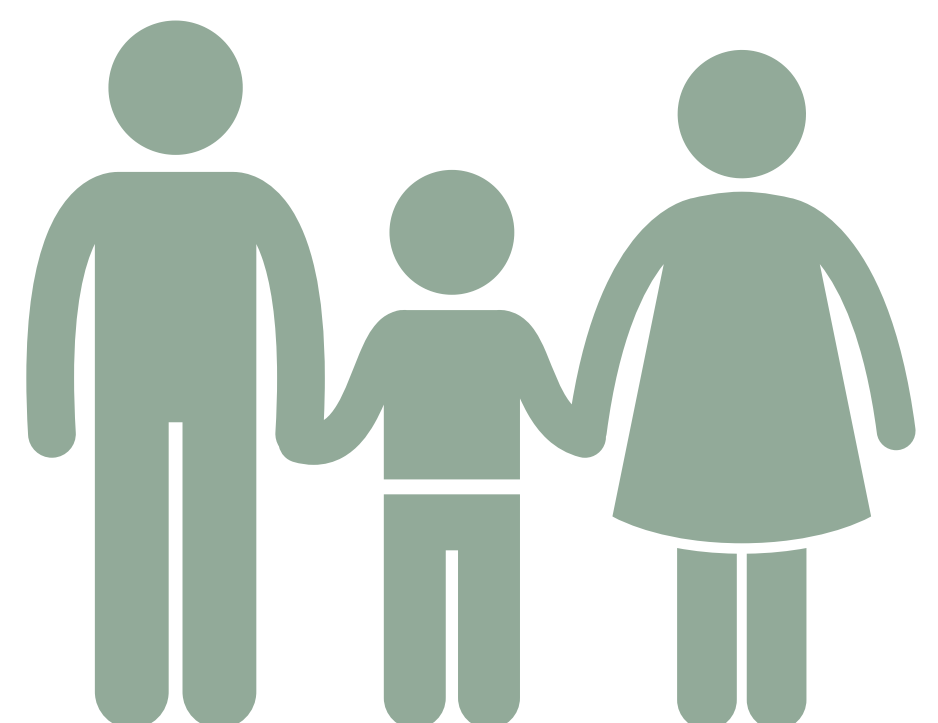
# Sensory

Since being at home you may have noticed an increase or decrease in your child's sensory behaviours. Being at home meant that you could be more flexible in how your child spends their time. However, some children will have missed the routine of school and access to sports like swimming that usually helps them to balance their arousal levels. Getting back to school might be hard for your child as they need to learn to get used to tolerating the classroom environment(s) again. This means a change in noise, light, smells and coping with several demands on their sensory systems.

If there are specific ways or strategies your child has used to cope in class in the past, it would be worth discussing this with your contact at school to see if this information has been passed onto their new teacher(s).

Sensory needs change over time so it will also be important to inform school of any improvement in sensory needs or change in sensory behaviours you have noticed since lockdown.

Getting back to school will be a big change and movement or environmental breaks may be needed initially or on a longer term basis. These breaks help to build a child's tolerance to a change of environment, such as returning to school. Your child may not require this but you can find more detail below:



# Movement Breaks

A movement break is a short, non-distracting movement that is acceptable within the environment to allow a child to get muscle movement to calm or alert, and organise themselves in order for them to be able to continue with their school work. Movement breaks are provided for specific children to facilitate an optimal level of alertness for classroom activities but they can be used for the whole class.

Movement break suggestions for children in the classroom :



## Chair push ups:

Grasp either side of the chair seat and push up to lift your bottom from the seat



## Back Press:

Press your back into the back of chair



## Knee Waves:

Place feet on floor, hands on knees; move knees in and out rapidly while resisting it with their hands



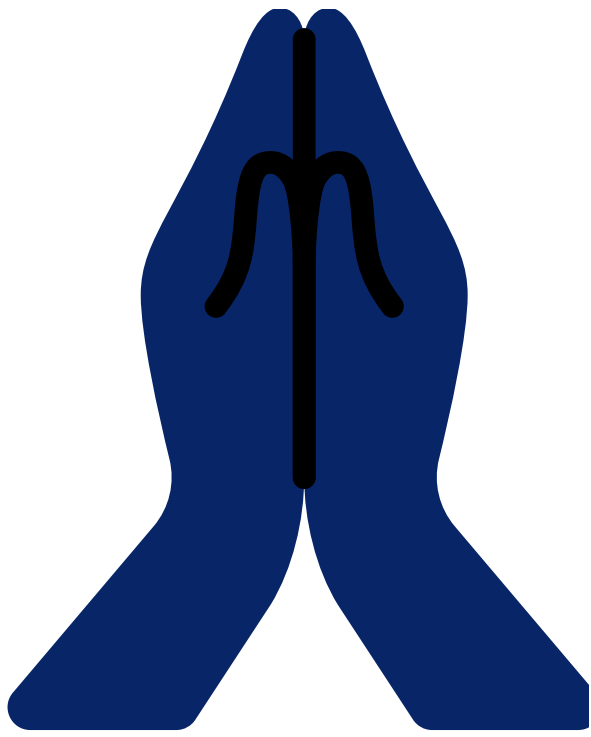
## Foot Stamps:

While seated at desk and grasping sides of seat with your hands, quickly raise and lower each leg with knees bent to “stomp” feet



## Hand Presses:

Turn to the peer beside you, place your hands together, palm to palm, and then push or press. Or they can do this by pushing their own hands together



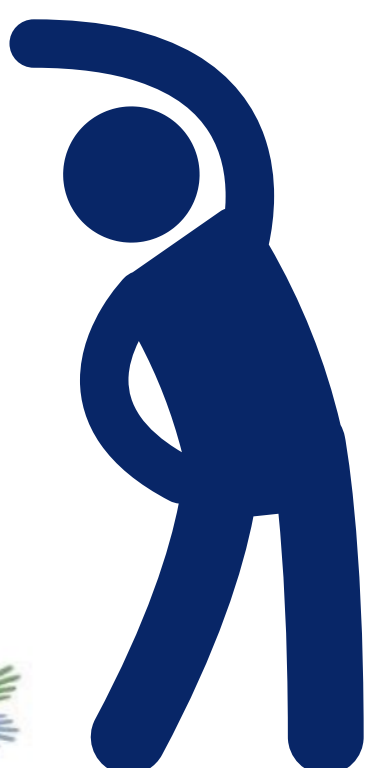
## Hand Hugs:

Clasp your own hands together (without interlocking fingers) and squeeze; alternate hand on top



## Leg Raises:

While seated at your desk with your hands holding each side of the chair seat, lift your legs off the floor with legs straight and hold for a count of 5–10 seconds



## Reach and Stretch:

Standing beside your desk, reach to the sky, reach to the floor





## Body Squeeze:

Put your hands on your head and press down gently, cross arms to opposite shoulder and press down gently, squeeze one arm with the opposite hand starting at the shoulder right down to the finger tips. Use both hands to start at the thighs and squeeze down until you reach the ankles. Now shake your body



## Rhythmic Body Claps:

Clap hands, clap hands on knees, clap hands on shoulders and other body parts



## Wall Push Ups:

Stand with feet together, one large step from wall, place hands on wall at shoulder level, touch nose to wall and then push away, this could be done between classes or during a toilet break



## Deep Breaths:

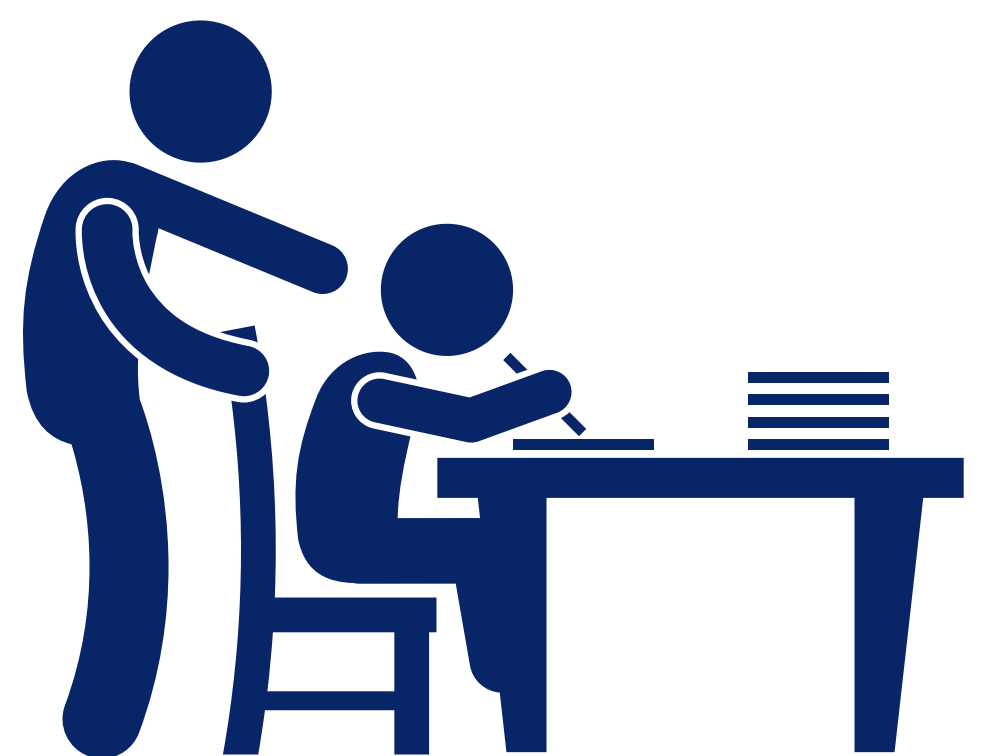
Breathe in for the count of 3 and out for the count of 5

## Additional Movement Breaks may include:

Additional movement breaks may include:

- Going for a drink / Washing hands
- Lunchtimes and gym class
- Running errands
- Handing out papers/books
- Getting up to sharpen pencils
- Show class work to the teacher

If a child struggles even with movement breaks you can also make an activity more 'sensory' by changing the position the child is in or the location of the learning activity. This will give them strong feedback through their posture and help maintain focus: eg: high kneeling, lying on their tummy or half kneeling.



# Developing a sensory fidget box

This is a box that has sensory items in it that are appealing to your child and help to calm or alert their sensory systems. See some examples of what to put in your box below.....

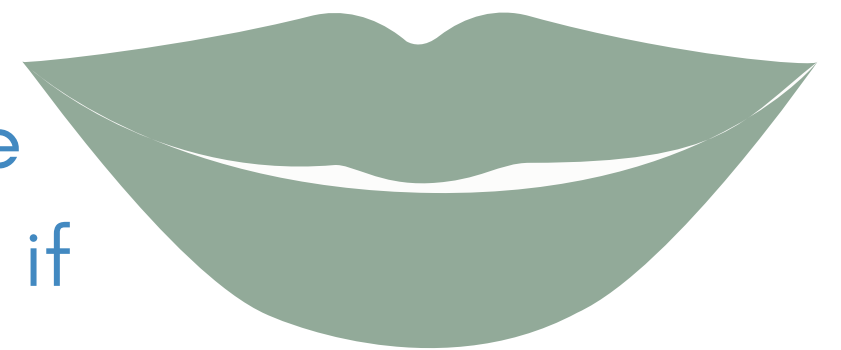
## Proprioception

Theraputty or Playdough, Theraband (supervised), Activity cards for proprioception e.g Yoga poses, chair press ups etc.



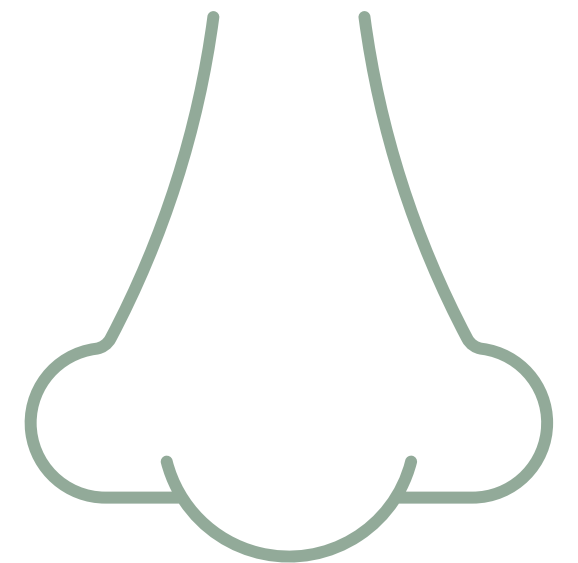
## Taste/Oral

Chewy Tubes and Pendants, Chewable Pencil Grips, Snacks if appropriate



## Smell

Scented Pens, Scented Pouches e.g bags of lavender



## Touch

Fidget toys/Spinners, Flour Balloons, Stress Balls, Blue Tac, Textured brush(smooth/rough), Mini Slinky



## Auditory

Musical Rattle, Kazoo, Bells



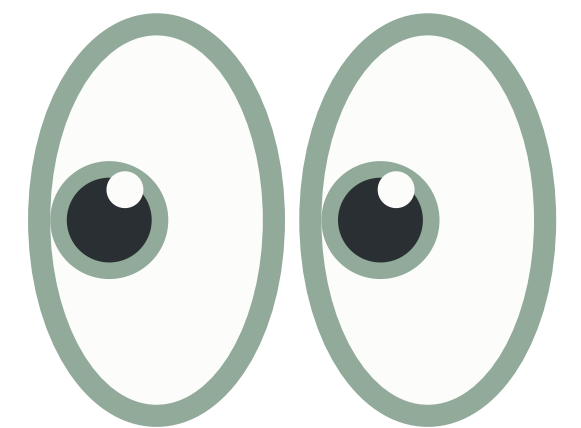
## Vestibular Movements

Movement activity cards, Jobs for teacher cards



## Visual

Rainmaker, Mini Windmill, Light Up Toys



## Interoception

Mindfulness games/activities, Body part dice: having a few body parts on a dice to roll and have the child become aware and describe how the body part is feeling



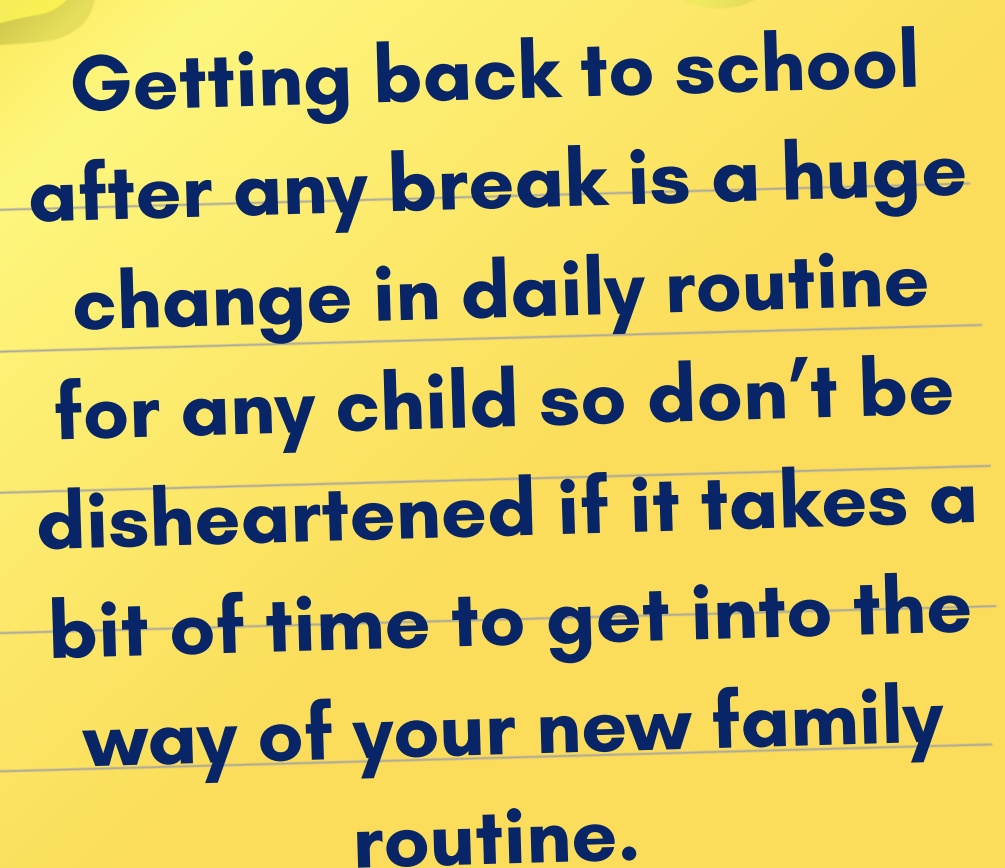
# Other Sensory Hints and Tips...

- If your child has packed lunches, think about what they can have that will give them sensory feedback like crunchy carrot sticks, sweet tomatoes or salty pretzels
- If you think your child may struggle with the smells and textures of the new items like hand sanitiser, you may want to provide one that they have tolerated at home
- If your child wears ear defenders then you may not have needed these so much at home. A change to a busier environment may be really difficult to tolerate. It is important to wear ear defenders only when needed as over using them can increase auditory sensitivity over time. It can be useful to have agreed times with your child and school for their use and to plan for this as much as possible in advance
- After school - If your child manages to tolerate sensory challenges at school, you may experience more challenges after school at home. This is often described as the 'coke bottle effect' because it is like a coke bottle being shaken throughout the day and the lid being taken off once they are at home. You may want to plan for this by having favourite snacks, chill out space/time, sport or walks planned immediately after school to de-stress. Playing relaxing music on the way home, if you travel by car, and not asking lots of questions about their day straight away will also help
- There may be different smells at school with increased cleaning. It may be useful to have available something that your child can use to tolerate these new smells. This could be a small piece of material with a dab of a smell they like (essential oil or perfume) or use of a sensory box (a small box or bag that they fill with sensory pleasing or a movement break

# Daily Routine

Getting up in the morning and getting ready for school can be a challenging time for many families, and a helpful tip is planning. Plan as much as possible so that the morning runs smoothly. Why don't you agree a 'morning routine' with your child and have them put it up on the wall in their room in whichever way makes sense for them e.g. in pictures, a timetable or key words. If your child is involved in the planning then they are more likely to take ownership of it and stick to it.

Your child's daily routine on a school day is likely to be full of learning and coping with lots of changes at school. It will be important to have some balance when they get home e.g. chill out time, not going straight into getting homework done. They will need time to process getting back to school and how they are coping with all the changes. Balance is important in any daily routine so that children have a mix of learning, helping around the house, free time, sleep and physical activity. Your child may be extremely tired in their first few weeks of school and may need a bit of help to keep going until bedtime with some low energy activities such as watching a film together. It may be helpful to have some ideas up your sleeve for the sluggish times after school. Some children might also appear 'hyper' after school and they would also benefit from some quieter activities to help them to regulate themselves after a busy day.



**Getting back to school after any break is a huge change in daily routine for any child so don't be disheartened if it takes a bit of time to get into the way of your new family routine.**

# Screens

Virtual learning means that children are working from screens for much longer during their school day. This can be hard for most children and they will need to take regular breaks from working on a screen. It might be worth discussing with your child how much time they were on screens before lockdown and what they are aiming for in the future so you can work towards that together in a planned way.

## Here are some ideas for how your child can take a screen break:

- Do some pencil/paper work instead then take a photo of it and send to the teacher
- Stretch and focus on good posture/sitting when sitting back down
- Have a stretch, walk, drink, snack, fresh air – it may be helpful to set a timer for a few minutes for this
- Talk to someone face to face
- Sensory (fidget box) or movement activity/break
- Listen to music/play an instrument
- Play with a pet
- Have thinking/planning time
- Creative activity/craft
- Any relaxing activity that your child enjoy

# Posture



Posture is simply the position of the parts of the body when we stand, sit or lie. If our postural muscles are strong and flexible, we are comfortable because they give us support and put the least pressure on our back. How your child spends their time at home and where is important. Most children will have been at home much longer than they are used to during the day.

Sitting in one position for a long time isn't advised and good posture is very important for children who are always growing.

## **When your child sits at the desk, make sure that:**

- Their feet can rest comfortably on the floor
- Their hips are at the same level, or a little bit higher than their knees
- Their lower back is supported so that it feels easier for them to sit taller
- Move their chair closer to their desk so they don't have to lean forward and their elbows can rest on the desk/table
- When your child works on a computer, their eyes should be at the level of the top of the screen
- Encourage your child to take frequent breaks, at least every 30 minutes, to stand up and walk around
- To keep a good posture, we need strong stabilising muscles
- Encourage your child to be aware of their posture and work on it by engaging in regular physical activity after school and at the weekend to maintain their overall strength



- When a child feels worried or tense, it can have an effect on their posture. Ask your child if they notice that their muscles, especially around their neck and shoulders, feel tense when they are worried. If so, encourage them to try and catch the beginning of this feeling and to try some of the following exercises to relax their muscles (these can be done in school but it would be good to practice these at home before returning to school, if possible)
- Roll their shoulders to the back, drawing a few small circles
- Roll their shoulders to the front a few times
- Sit tall and have them imagine an invisible thread attached to the top of their head gently pulling them up. Get them to look over their right shoulder and feel the stretch in their neck. Gently look over their left shoulder and feel the stretch. Repeat 5-10 times
- Interlace their fingers and place their hands behind their head. They will be sitting but ask them to imagine that they are lying on a beach relaxing. Next, they can gently pull their elbows towards their back and arch their back a little bit more. This should give them a nice stretch in their shoulders, back and chest
- Chair twist. When sitting in a chair, ask your child to hold onto the arm rest/seat on one side with both hands and slowly look behind them. Use the arm rest/seat to increase the amount they are able to turn their upper body. Make sure they stretch the other side as well



# Physical Activity



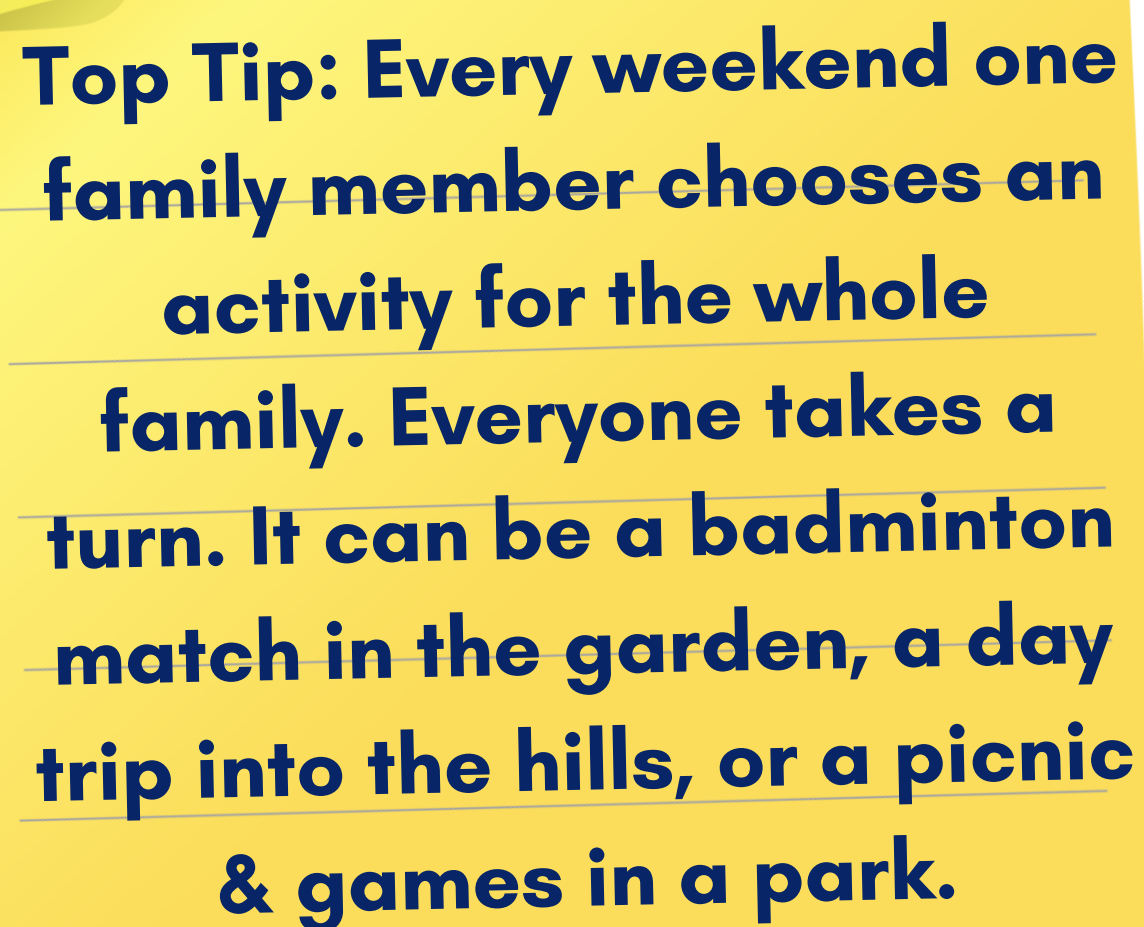
Regular physical activity is crucial not only for our physical but also mental health. Children who exercise regularly are more resilient and cope better in stressful situations. You can make enjoyable physical activities part of your daily routine. It can be fun, sociable, relaxing and it can provide a quality time for the whole family or your child's friendship group.

At the end of a busy day, short and gentle muscle stretches combined with deep breathing will help your child unwind and aid relaxation before sleep. These stretches will ease muscle tension and prevent muscular pain. You can play relaxing music and dim the lights while performing them.

During the day, engage in more strenuous activities e.g. football, trampoline, brisk walking. This type of activity, when done regularly, will significantly boost your child's mood, boost their confidence as well as energy levels.

If you have a child who struggles to get motivated towards the ideas above then just encourage a little exercise often e.g. a 10 minute walk together once a day to begin with and build it up from there.

What is the best exercise? The one that gets you coming back for more. Make it enjoyable!



**Top Tip: Every weekend one family member chooses an activity for the whole family. Everyone takes a turn. It can be a badminton match in the garden, a day trip into the hills, or a picnic & games in a park.**

# Eating for Learning and Wellbeing

Eating and drinking well is important for your child's capacity to learn at both home and school. Energy from food provides brain power and breakfast containing a source of carbohydrate such as cereal or toast and fruit provide the energy your child needs to start their day. Regular meals with a source of carbohydrate throughout the day help your child's energy levels and concentration for learning.

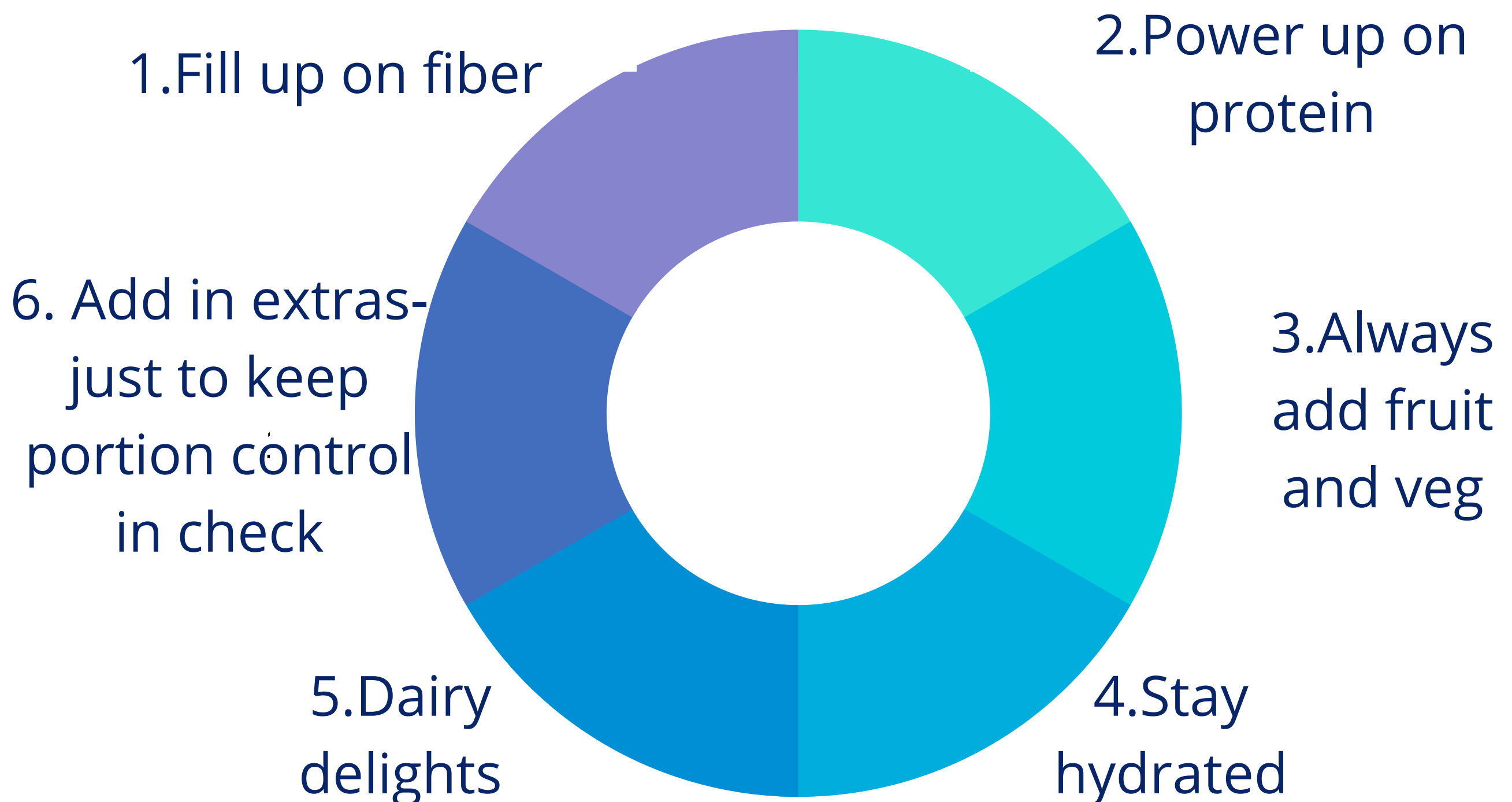
## **Some nutrition (diet and eating) hints and tips:**

- Energy from food provides brain power and breakfast containing a source of carbohydrate such as cereal or toast and fruit provide the energy your child needs
- **Carbohydrate=Glucose=Brain Power!** The brain uses 20% of all energy needed by the body to fuel it.
- Regular meals with a source of carbohydrate throughout the day help your child's energy levels and concentration for learning
- Children need protein to allow their muscles to grow and develop which means they can do activities they enjoy. Meat, fish, eggs and beans are all sources of protein.
- We need dairy to have strong bones e.g. milk, yogurt and cheese
- Food and Mood - when our bodies have enough energy then it means we can do what we like and need to do and this boosts our mood. When your child doesn't eat enough nutrient-rich foods, their body may lack vitamins and minerals, often affecting their energy, mood and brain function
- Sugar and caffeine (including energy drinks) - these are known to have an effect on children and it is worth keeping an eye on how much of these your child is having as having too much is likely to impact on energy levels and sleep



# Packed Lunches

Healthy packed lunches or school meals – think of the food groups when making your child’s packed lunch. Try to include fruit and vegetables, some carbohydrates such as a sandwich, protein such as meat or cheese and a source of dairy such as a yogurt to help your child’s healthy bones. Here are some packed lunch tips:



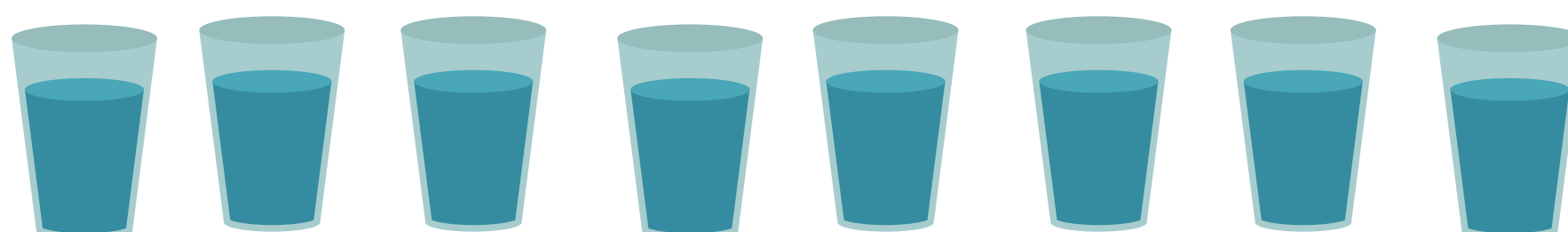
Eating ‘Five a day’ doesn’t just need to be for school time. Try to get your child to eat a rainbow of colours –try to eat raw fruit and vegetables and add veggies to main meals in stews. You can use tinned or frozen fruit/vegetables as well as those in season.

Should I give my child supplements/vitamins? – A varied and nutritious diet is the most reliable way to ensure that your child’s developing brain and body gets everything it needs. The body often absorbs nutrients better from real food rather than from supplements. Not every child accepts a varied diet so supplements can be a helpful “safety net” in some cases. A general vitamin and mineral supplement is helpful for any child with a poor diet. An omega 3 supplement might benefit a child who eats very little oily fish. Most children need vitamin D supplements.

# Fluid Intake

Not drinking enough fluid can lead to headaches and poor concentration. Sometimes your child may think they are hungry when they are actually thirsty and need to drink so try and encourage them to take a drink before reaching for a snack. Drinking enough also encourage children to go to the loo often and avoid constipation and sore tummies.

Aim for **8 - 10 glasses** per day and more if it's hot.



**Take a refillable water bottle with you to school and drink water throughout the school day**

## Recommended Fluid for ages:

0-6 months:	550mls (milk)
7-12 months:	640-800 mls
1-2 years:	880-960 mls
2-3 years:	1040 mls
4-8 years:	1280 mls
9-13 years:	Boys : 1680 mls Girls: 1520 mls
14 years-adults:	Male: 2000 mls Female: 1600 mls

# SLEEP zzzZ

Sleep is important for learning and general health because children need sleep to grow their bodies and their brains! If children don't have enough sleep then it can affect many aspects of their lives including concentration, ability to manage emotions and motivation to do everyday activities. Sleep is when our body rests and recovers from the day. We have different sleep cycles of sleep and they are all important. Having enough good sleep and a good sleep routine means that children will have enough energy to do the daily activities that they want and need to do such as going to school, meeting friends, doing some physical activity etc.

During lockdown your child might have had longer periods in their bedroom/ on their bed than usual. It may be good to have a bit less time in their bedroom as the return to school approaches. This will help to associate time in the bedroom with sleep again.

## **Questions to think about.....**

- How does your child's room need to be to help them sleep? Think of temperature, if the window and door are open or closed
- Does your child like a light or heavy duvet or blanket?
- What makes your child feel secure in bed? Do you tuck them in or would sleeping in a sleeping bag help them feel more secure?
- Is your household busy around bed time? can you limit noise around the time you would expect your child to go off to sleep?
- Are you able to limit screen time for an hour before bedtime? If not, can you use night mode on devices to limit the impact of screens before trying to get to sleep?
- Can you create a dark area for falling asleep? You may still need to use a dim nightlight to help your child feel safe

**Some children struggle to get off to sleep so following good 'sleep hygiene' is important. This includes.....**

# Sleep Strategies

Creating a calm environment e.g. a darker space with soothing lights such as a lava lamp and relaxing music/sounds

Doing some quiet 'winding down' activities in the hour before bedtime e.g. read a book

Natural outdoor light during the day has a big impact on the day-night body clock and will promote good sleep - even 15 minutes a day is good!

A warm relaxing bath and warm drink before bed can help too

Going to bed at a regular time

Limiting screen time for the hour prior to bedtime

A good amount of physical activity nearer the start of the day will promote good sleep

Try to avoid naps during the day as this means your child may not naturally be tired at bedtime which makes it harder to get off to sleep

If your child really struggles to get off to sleep themselves, think about using mindfulness/relaxation guided exercises. You can get these on youtube or download apps e.g. smiling mind. It would be useful to try these together for the first few times

# Summary

We hope the information in this booklet has been helpful for you in planning for your child's return to school. Please remember that school staff are there to support your child and you. If you had a specific child's plan in place before lockdown then it is a good idea to contact school, at the earliest opportunity, to ask if this can be reviewed given the change in circumstances.

We wish you and your child well through this big change.

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