

A dose of Health & Wellbeing

Your bitesize guide to a healthier lifestyle,
from your school nursing team
for secondary school parents

March 2024

Happy Easter!

Welcome to our Easter edition of your newsletter from your school nursing team at Berkshire Healthcare.

Read on for lots of information on how to keep yourself healthy.

In this newsletter

- [Exam stress](#)
- [Sleep](#)
- [Hay Fever](#)
- [Constipation](#)
- [Spots](#)
- [Getting active](#)
- [Resilience and emotional support](#)
- [Measles](#)
- [Immunisations](#)
- [Getting enough fluids](#)
- [Where to go for medical advice](#)
- [Contacting us](#)



Exam stress

Supporting your child during exam periods is crucial, as they can feel very stressed and under pressure. Here are some ways to help them cope.

1. **Encourage open communication:** Create a supportive environment where they feel comfortable expressing their feelings and concerns about exams. Listen without judgment and offer empathy and understanding. Encourage them to talk about their worries and fears and reassure them that it's normal to feel stressed during exams.
2. **Provide practical support:** Help them develop effective study strategies and time management skills to reduce feelings of overwhelm. Offer to help them create study timetables so that they can break things down into manageable chunks.
3. **Foster a positive mindset:** Let them know that you appreciate their effort and progress not just the outcomes of exams. Encourage them to set realistic goals and celebrate their achievements along the way, no matter how small. Remind them that exams are just one part of their school journey.
4. **Teach stress management techniques:** Help practice techniques like deep breathing, mindfulness, meditation, or progressive muscle relaxation. This can help calm the minds, reduce physical tension, and improve focus and concentration.
5. **Encourage them to practise self-care.** Getting enough sleep, eating healthily, and taking breaks to recharge are all important.
5. **Encourage physical activity:** Regular exercise is a natural stress reliever and mood booster and it releases endorphins which can help reduce stress and anxiety. Encourage them to move more, whether it's going for a walk, practicing yoga, playing sports, or dancing.
6. **Provide emotional support:** Remind them of their strengths and capabilities, and let them know that you believe in them. Validate their feelings and remind them that it's okay to feel nervous or anxious and that they can overcome challenges.

If their exam stress becomes overwhelming and starts to impact their daily functioning or mental health, encourage them to seek support. Speak to the school or the school nurse.

[Exam Time & Exam Stress | Parents Guide To Support | YoungMinds](#)

[Exams: Supporting your Child \(charliewaller.org\)](#)

[Help your child beat exam stress - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

Sleep

It can be difficult to know how much sleep your child needs. Having good sleep habits supports good physical health, brain function & emotional wellbeing. This chart gives an idea of the amount of sleep needed for good health.

Your child's age	Recommended sleep time in 24 hours
Children 6 to 12 years	9 to 12 hours
Teenagers 13 to 18 years	8 to 10 hours

(2016 American Academy of Sleep Medicine 'Consensus Statement' regarding the recommended amount of sleep for children and young people).

- If your child has problems sleeping, listen to them. You cannot force sleep no matter how many times you tell them to 'just go to sleep'!
- Encourage them to have regular sleep and wake up times – even at the weekend.
- Encourage daily exercise and fresh air.
- Open the curtains first thing in the morning as natural daylight helps to re-set the body clock.
- Try to discourage sugary snacks. Provide healthier options such as wholemeal toast, low sugar cereal, fruit, cheese & crackers.
- Encourage them to avoid caffeine in energy drinks, cola, tea & coffee.
- Make the bedroom a relaxing space, and discourage doing anything other than sleeping in bed.
- Discuss with your child about switching off electronic devices 1 hour before bed. The blue light from screens stops the production of melatonin (the sleep hormone).
- Agree a bedtime.
- Ensure their room is dark, cool, quiet, safe and comfortable.
- Encourage them to dim the lights or use a low-lit lamp in the evening to help produce melatonin

For hints & tips to help there is an excellent free eBook produced by the sleep charity you can download: [Teens & Young People - Teen Sleep Hub](#)

[Parents & Carers - Teen Sleep Hub](#)

[Sleep – Video 3 \(English\) \(youtube.com\)](#)

[Sleep Video -youtube](#)



Hay fever (allergic rhinitis)

We're getting into hay fever season again. Hayfever is an allergic reaction where from the body's immune system reacts to allergens that are in the air.

Contact with an allergen causes the body to respond by releasing a chemical called histamine which is what causes symptoms such as itchy eyes, sneezing, coughing, and runny nose.

There are two types of hay fever:

Seasonal	Perennial
Symptoms usually occur between March and September	Symptoms all year round
When pollen counts are high	Related to household allergens
Pollen from trees, plants, weeds or all 3	Pets, dust, mould spores

It is helpful to know which type causes your child's symptoms as this will help them manage the symptoms better.

Things you can do to help:

- Encourage your child to wear wrap-around sunglasses to prevent pollen from entering the eyes.
- Put a petroleum jelly (such as Vaseline) around their nostrils to stop pollen from going up the nose.
- Keep windows and doors shut to keep pollen out.
- Get them to shower at the end of every day to remove pollen from hair and body.
- Keep your child indoors when possible.
- Make sure your home is hoovered regularly and dusted with a damp cloth.
- Add pollen filters for the car air vents.
- Avoid drying clothes outside as pollen can be blown onto them.
- Make sure they stay away from cigarette smoke as this can make symptoms worse.
- Avoid cut grass, especially playing on it.
- Avoid having fresh flowers in the home.

[Hay Fever | Allergy UK | National Charity](#)

[Hay fever - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

Constipation

Could your child be constipated? Many young people are constipated but it can be hard to notice it.

They may be constipated if:

- They have done less than 3 poos in the last week
- Their poo is large and hard
- Their poo looks like "rabbit droppings" or little pellets
- They are straining or in pain when they poo
- They have some bleeding during or after having a poo, because the poo is large and hard
- They have a poor appetite or stomach pain that improves after they poo.

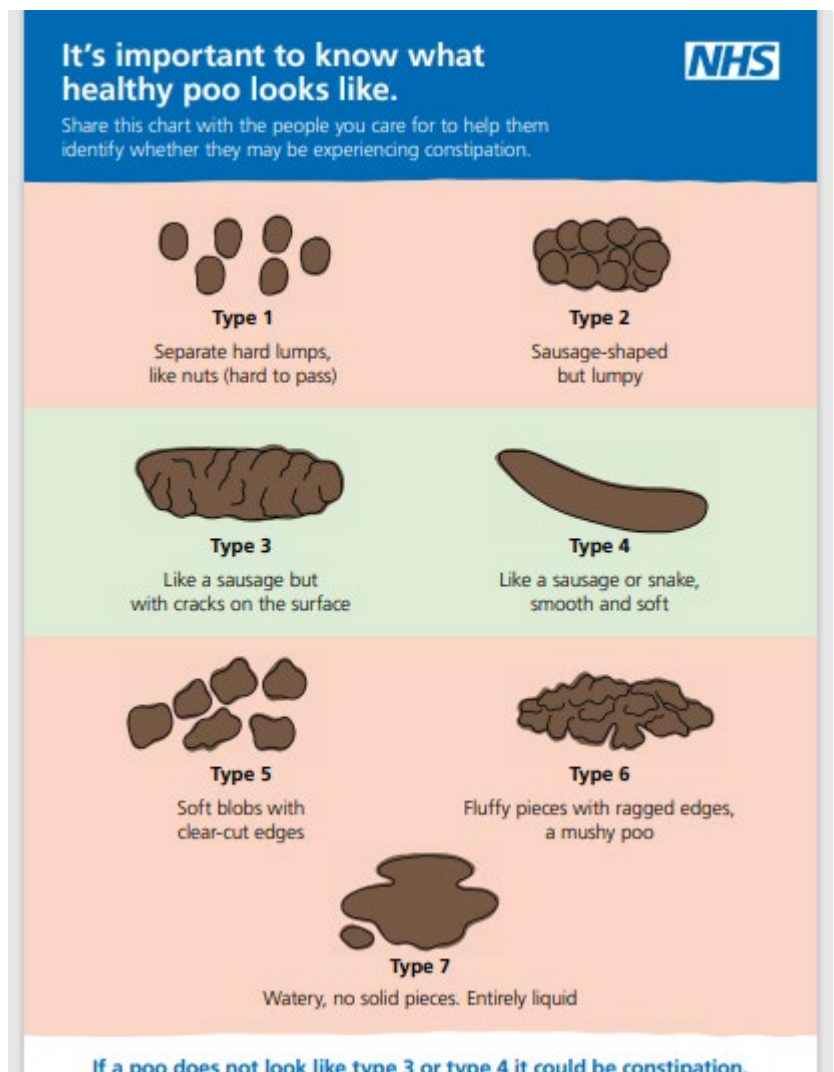
Possible causes

- Not eating enough high-fibre foods like fruit and veg
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Feeling pressured or not giving enough time to sitting on the toilet
- Feeling worried or anxious about something – such as exams, moving house, relationships

[How to get more fibre into your diet - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

For further information & management advice visit:

[Constipation - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)



[Bristol Stool Chart \(england.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

Spots

It's natural and normal to have spots when going through puberty. This is because of the change in hormones in a young person's body.

Encourage your child to:

- Try and avoid popping and squeezing spots, as this can make them worse and may cause scarring.
- Wash the affected area with mild soap and water twice a day.
- Exercise: even though exercise can't cure teenage spots it can help boost mood and self-esteem.
- Wash after any physical activity as sweat can cause irritation and spots.
- Always remove makeup before bed.

Worried it may be acne?

Acne is blackheads and whiteheads and pus-filled spots (pustules).

[Acne - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

[Acne – British Skin Foundation](#)

If you or they are worried about their spots, you can contact your GP for more advice.

[What Causes Spots? | How To Stop Getting Spots | The Mix](#)

Getting active



Sport In Mind

[Sport in Mind](#) run a [Youth Programme](#) offering sessions for young people to help you feel empowered to find your voice, understand your feelings, and make the vital connection between sport and positive mental health.

Visit: [Youth Community Sessions | Sport in Mind](#)

They also offer an NCS accredited volunteer programme for students aged 16-17 where you can use your voice to create positive change in the community. This programme is not just about sports; it's about personal growth, mental wellbeing, and preparing for your future. [Know a student who might be interested? Pass it on!](#)

They also have [breathing cards](#) and [journals](#) which are packed with exciting activities, challenges and information to empower children and young people to make positive ongoing changes to their physical health and open discussions about mental health and wellbeing. [Why not send one to a friend?](#)

Resilience



Resilience is all about how well you adapt during difficult times. Your child is constantly developing their resilience and you can help and support them in many ways.

Difficulties a young person may struggle with can include, friendships, relationships, exams, family connections, discrimination, physical &/or emotional health concerns, or managing stress & anxiety.

The key to building resilience is developing their confidence and self-esteem and boosting their motivation to help them to work through challenges.

To encourage your child to build their resilience and coping strategies:

- Give positive encouragement and praise.
- Share your experiences with them so they can see you understand what they are going through.
- Encourage them to understand, express and manage their emotions.
- Encourage them to think positively about a situation.
- Help them recognise their strengths, talk about them and how they can be used day to day.
- Give them space to spend time with their friends and the people they love and help them to build positive relationships.
- Help them spend time doing the things they love.
- Encourage them to get to know who they are and what values they hold.
- Help them learn to be independent in their actions and thoughts.
- Encourage them to learn problem-solving skill to help them resolve issues.
- Whether they accomplish them or not, encourage them to plan goals and challenges, which help to boost their self-esteem and confidence and independence.
- Help them list all the things they are good at including being kind, helpful and loving and show them why these attributes are so essential in life.

For more information in supporting your child visit:

[How to really listen to your child | YoungMinds](#)

[Building resilience in children and teens | Family Lives](#)

When they can't tell anyone else, Tellmi

Tellmi is a safe anonymous app where your child can talk about absolutely anything, from anxiety to autism, self-harm to self-esteem. Sharing their concerns can really help them feel better. There are moderators checking everything to keep them safe and in-house counsellors on hand if they need extra support.

Life can be tough but Tellmi makes it easy to talk about whatever is on their mind. Encourage them to share their problems and get help and advice from a supportive community.

[Tellmi: Better Mental Health on the App Store](#)



Measles is on the increase

Measles is a highly infectious disease that can lead to serious problems like pneumonia, meningitis, and even long-term disability or death. Symptoms include a high fever, sore red watery eyes and a blotchy red-brown rash. It is easy to catch in when in close contact with others like at school.

Please check in your child's red book or with their GP to make sure they are up to date with 2 doses of the MMR vaccine. If they have missed either of these 2 doses, please book an appointment with your GP.

For more information you can email us:

westschoolimms@berkshire.nhs.uk (For schools in Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham).

eastschoolimms@berkshire.nhs.uk (For schools in Bracknell).

Or call: 0300 365 0077

And for more information visit:

[MMR \(measles, mumps and rubella\) vaccine - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[MMR Vaccine \(Measles, Mumps and Rubella Vaccine\) | Vaccine Knowledge Project \(ox.ac.uk\)](#)

An NHS poster with a blue background. At the top right is the NHS logo. The main text is in white on dark blue rectangular backgrounds: "2 doses of the MMR vaccine can stop your child becoming seriously unwell with measles". At the bottom left are two white vaccine bottles with blue labels. At the bottom right, white text says "Make sure your child is up to date with their MMR vaccinations".

NHS

2 doses of the MMR vaccine can stop your child becoming seriously unwell with measles

Make sure your child is up to date with their MMR vaccinations

Is your child up to date with their immunisations?

We are still seeing local outbreaks of some nasty illnesses and diseases such as measles.

Vaccines are free, they prevent children becoming ill from infectious diseases and have helped to save millions of lives globally.

You can check your child's red book (PCHR), speak to your GP, or phone our local child health service (0300 5611851) to check whether they have received all their immunisations. If your child was vaccinated outside of the UK, you'll need to provide evidence to your GP practice so that they can check whether your child needs any further vaccinations.

To find out more visit the [NHS Vaccinations website](#) and the [Berkshire Healthcare website](#).



Travel vaccinations

If you are going abroad your child might need some additional vaccines to their routine childhood ones. Some countries have serious diseases that you need protection against before you travel.

Your GP clinic should have a practice nurse who specialises in travel immunisations, or you will need to go to a private travel clinic.

For further information and advice visit: [Travel vaccinations - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

You can find out which vaccinations you need for the areas you'll be visiting here:

- [Travel Health Pro](#)
- [NHS Fit for Travel](#)

Take proof of any previous immunisations to the appointment. There may be a cost for some vaccines. Some countries require proof of vaccination for entry. Vaccines can take 6-8 weeks to build immunity so give yourself plenty of time.

Getting enough fluids

Drinking fresh water is one of the best things we can do for our health.

We need between 6-8 glasses of fluid a day to keep hydrated. Dehydration can lead to fatigue and decreased concentration, making it harder to focus in class or during activities. By drinking enough water, you'll feel more energised. Our brains are made up of about 75% water, so drinking water helps maintain proper brain function, improves memory, attention, and problem-solving skills.

Staying hydrated also helps you stay well, sleep better, fight illnesses, prevents constipation, supports healthy skin, and reduces the risk of headaches and muscle cramps, especially during physical activities like sports or exercise.

Daily fluid intake in ml, by age and gender:

Age	Girl	Boy
4 - 8 years	1,000 - 1,400ml	1,000 - 1,400ml
9 - 13 years	1,200 - 2,100ml	1,400 - 2,300ml
14 - 18 years	1,400 - 2,500ml	2,100 - 3,200ml

Drinking water regularly helps flush out toxins from the body, keeping the kidneys healthy. Symptoms of dehydration include thirst, dark-coloured wee, dizziness, and confusion.

There is a lot of hidden sugar and additives in other drinks such as milkshakes, fruit juice and energy drinks. These can contribute to an unhealthy weight and tooth decay.

Here are some ways to encourage your child to drink more healthy fluids:

- Add slices of fruit or cucumber to a bottle of water.
- Encourage them to take sips throughout the day.
- Always have a bottle of water by their side.
- Increase their daily amount if they have been exercising.
- Look for 'hidden sugar' on drink labels.
- Dilute squash or cordial as recommended on the label directions.
- If they do drink squash or cordial, make sure it's sugar-free.

[Water, drinks and hydration - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

Think about the environment, tap water is great: there's no need to buy water in bottles or cans!



Know where to go if you need medical advice



Minor cuts and grazes
Bruises and minor sprains
Coughs and colds

Self Care

Stock your
medicine cabinet



Minor illnesses
Headache
Stomach upsets
Bites and stings

Pharmacy



Feeling unwell?
Unsure?
Anxious?
Need help?

NHS 111



Persistent symptoms
Chronic pain
Long term conditions

GP Advice

Out of Hours call 111



Choking
Chest pain
Blacking out
Serious blood loss

A&E or 999

Emergencies only



If you have a child aged 5-19 you can contact a member of the school nursing team by text message for confidential, anonymous help and advice.

We can offer advice and support on many topics like:

- Sleep
- Low mood
- Self harm
- Body changes
- Emotional health and wellbeing
- Healthy eating
- Anxiety and stress
- Drugs, alcohol and smoking

Text: 07312 263194

Open 9am - 4:30pm Mon-Fri
(excluding bank holidays)

How to contact your School Nursing team

We are available Monday to Friday 9am-5pm.
There is reduced cover during school holidays

Bracknell Forest

0300 365 6000

BracknellForest.SN@berkshire.nhs.uk

Reading

0118 9047320

csnreading@berkshire.nhs.uk

Wokingham

0118 9047330

csnwokingham@berkshire.nhs.uk

West Berkshire

0118 9047325

csnwestberks@berkshire.nhs.uk

Visit our website

cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/school-nursing

Follow us on social media

