

The nurse who observes the following signs of stress in a child should explore the situation further:

- Stomach pains or headache
- Sleep problems
- Bedwetting
- Changes in eating habits
- Aggressive or stubborn behavior
- Withdrawal or reluctance to participate
- Regression to earlier behaviors (e.g., thumb sucking)
- Trouble concentrating or changes in academic performance

Children 7 to 12 years old are capable of identifying their own physiologic responses to stress. Children should be taught to recognize the signs as indicators of stress and to use techniques to manage their stress. Children can learn relaxation techniques such as deep-breathing exercises, progressive relaxation of muscle groups, yoga, and positive imagery to reduce stress ([Bothe, Grignon, and Olness, 2014](#); [White, 2012](#)). Encouraging them to “blow off steam” through physical activity reduces tension and anxiety. Children can be encouraged to observe effective coping strategies in others and adopt them for their own use. When an effective strategy has been developed for one situation, parents can show the child how to transfer the coping strategy or technique to other situations.

In addition to stress, school-age children experience a wide variety of fears, including fear of the dark, excessive worry about past behavior, self-consciousness, social withdrawal, and an excessive need for reassurance. These fears are considered normal for children this age. During the middle-school years, children become less fearful of body safety than they were as preschoolers, but they still fear being hurt, being kidnapped, or having to undergo surgery. They also fear death and are fascinated by all the