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## Surviving Back to School: Timesaving Tips for Working Parents

Although the temperature is still hot outside, many Atlanta-area children are heading back to school over the next few weeks, which can be a hectic change in routine for families. To help with the back-to-school transition, we've pulled together the following tips and resources offered by Children's and other busy parents like you.

**Childcare**

A pressing need for many parents is safe, reliable childcare before and after school and also backup options if their child or main care provider is sick. Children's provides solutions to primary and backup care. Our [Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP) provider can help you research childcare options, including the three sponsored by Children's. For backup care, Children's partners with Work Options Group to provide either home or onsite care by screened sitters at a discount to employees. Also, Children's grants free access to thousands of area babysitters through [sittercity.com](#).

**Healthy Lunches**

Although many schools are taking steps to improve the nutritional content of their lunch offerings, kids still might not choose the healthy option and fill up on fried foods and soda. Sharon Robinson, Children's Working Mother of the Year and Team Mom member, recommends packing lunches the night before, instead of relying on school lunch. "By packing lunch, I save money and I feel good knowing what my daughter ate and didn't eat. If the vegetable came home with her, it often reappears on her dinner plate. She knows the routine now and rarely 'balks' at what I pack," says Sharon.



Melissa Walton, Children's Team Mom member, has an alternative to peanut butter and jelly if your school bans peanut butter due to peanut allergies. She layers cream cheese and jelly on a flour tortilla and rolls it. Melissa also freezes drink boxes or pouches for a useful ice pack to keep lunch items cold.

For other healthy meal and snack recipes, read the Children's publication [Cooking Up Some Changes](#) and related articles in the Strong4Life Online [Health Library](#).

**Homework Help**

Homework can be a source of stress and worry for parents. Experts recommend that parents set up a quiet area and designated time for homework for each child. Plan with your child the best time to tackle homework. For example, is it immediately when they get home, after an hour's break or after dinner?

Team Mom member Nydia Gleaton says that many teachers send home a weekly homework packet due Friday for the younger grades. She recommends that parents who have to work some evenings a week help their children do assignments ahead of time on the nights the parents are home so they can ensure the work is completed.

If your child is struggling with a subject and needs a tutor, [EAP](#) through Children's can research tutor options for you.

**The Morning Craziness**

To avoid morning meltdowns, Renee McShan, Team Mom member, begins 2-3 weeks before school starts. "I prepare dinner and we eat earlier, and we begin our wind down time after to prepare them for a restful slumber. Since this can be a busy time of year with school and activities coming together, I try to incorporate a routine that has the proper balance of nutrition, education, fun and rest," says Renee.

Preparing everything the night before, including planning outfits, signing permission slips, making lunches and packing the backpack, also allows for less stressful departures in the morning. One mom plans her daughter's outfits for the week in a specially designed hanging bag in her closet.

**Backpack Safety**

Kids and teens carry an enormous load on their backs, including books, school supplies, athletic gear and electronics. Orthopedic surgeons recommend children use both of a backpack's straps to hold the pack two inches above the waist and that the heaviest items should be closest to the back. The backpack should never weigh more than 10 to 20 percent of a child's body weight. For healthier backpack tips, visit the [Healthy Library](#) at Strong4Life Online.

**Other Tips**

- Limit or eliminate TV watching in the mornings before school and during homework.
  - Wait until mid-September to go shopping for clothing. Items will be on sale, and your child will have a better idea of what's in style.
  - Buy plastic drink boxes and food containers and save money by making your own "prepackaged" lunch box items.
  - Create a master family schedule and include each person's appointments and activities.
- If you have your own back-to-school tips, send us an [e-mail](#).

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