

Stress, Kids and Health?

Stress means different things to different people. For some people “stressed” is a label they want to avoid, for others it’s a big part of daily life.

So if we’re talking about children, what do you think of when you hear the words stress?

Since my childhood, I can see that the school system puts increasing stress upon our children. With SATs from an early age, and the ever increasing pressure for children to achieve academically and go onto further education, children learn to handle academic stress from an early age.

It used to be that children would learn to read when they went to school, aged 5. Now many children can already read before starting school, so parents often feel pressured to teach their child to read, rather than to play?



From a healthcare perspective, there are three key areas that can affect a child. Mental/emotional stress, we have already alluded to by looking at the pressures at school. Other stresses could be the emotions that are generated if parents separate or if the main breadwinner loses their job and there is friction at home. Bullying is another major source of emotional/mental stress for children. Some children find it hard to make friends and to fit in at school which can result in them not wanting to go to school. Often the latter two causes can result in physical symptoms in a child, such as “tummy ache” or headaches, where the child doesn’t want to go to school.

Physical stresses are also important for a Childs health. The first obvious physical stress is birth itself. A C-section is a physically stressful way for a child to come into the world. And many “normal” births have been shown to result in micro-trauma to the Childs neck (though only 10% of these traumas result in symptoms such as colic, excessive crying or ear infections). As children grow up they become involved in the rough and tumble of nursery or play groups. When they get older team sports such as football or rugby or maybe judo or kick-boxing are can be physically demanding and for some kids stressful. All of these are potentially traumatic, though there are huge physical benefits and they should be encouraged.



The third area that has probably changed more in the last 30 years than any other area is the amount of chemical stresses are children are exposed to in the first 10 years of life. Fizzy drinks which used to be a treat, are now a staple for many children and contain a cocktail of chemicals that can be damaging to development or create behavioural problems. Most processed foods contain a long list of E-numbers, add to that fast food such as burgers or hotdogs, and our children are having to handle an increasing number of substances that their relatively immature digestive systems

struggle with. We also put more vaccinations into our children than ever before and a growing number of health professionals are raising concerns about the chemical overload from this approach.

So with the three areas of stress – chemical, emotional/mental and physical, the health of our children appears to be declining. Asthma is at an all time high, 1 in 9 thought to be affected. Learning disabilities affect 1 in 6, autism 1 in 100 and diabetes 1 in 450. Our children have more stressors than ever before to handle.

So what can you do? Firstly, feed them a simple balanced diet, avoiding artificial sweeteners, colouring and additives and fizzy drinks. Teach them about food and make it fun. Lead by example so that your kids learn from you. Make sure your kids get plenty of exercise and fresh air. It's fun to do as a family and being outside doesn't have to cost the earth. Be accepting of the potential stresses at school and support your kids. But also accept your kids and if they're not brain of Britain celebrate what they're good at. Be informed about



vaccines. There are plenty of excellent sites that will give you the information you need to make the right decision for your child. Get your child checked regularly by a subluxation based Chiropractor as stress shows up in the spine of a child, and chiropractic care for kids is a gentle, effective way of improving their ability to handle stress and get more from life.

The most common reasons children see chiropractors are to address the symptoms of ear infections, colic and sleeping problems. More and more parents take their kids to a chiropractor to maintain their health so that they can grow into healthy, active adults and reach their full potential in life.