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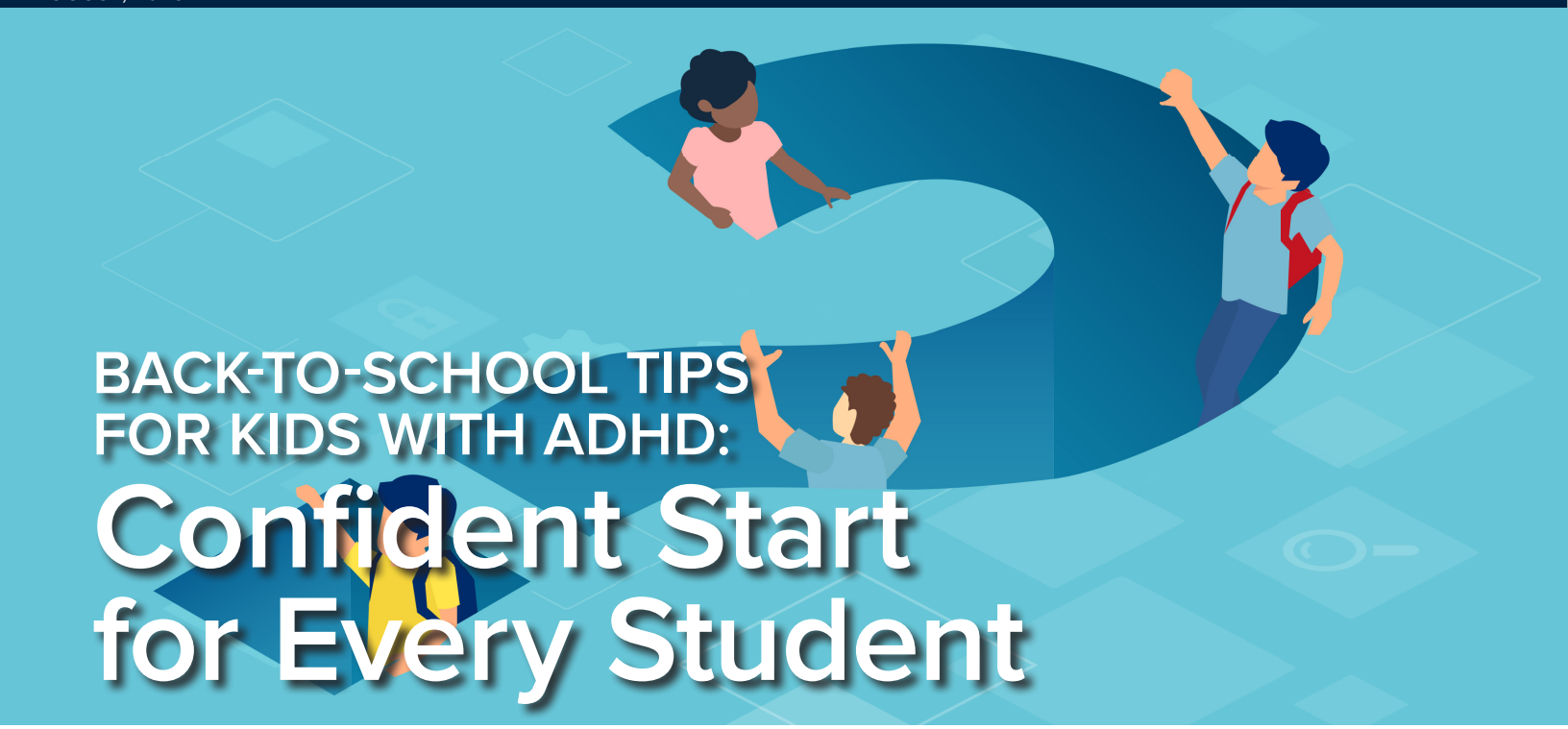
Wellness Wednesdays

AUGUST, 2025 WEEK 2



BACK-TO-SCHOOL TIPS FOR KIDS WITH ADHD: Confident Start for Every Student

Back-to-school is an exciting time for many. However, families of ADHD children, may be particularly distressed because of the newness of everything. New routines, new classroom expectations, and new social shifts can be overwhelming without adequate support.

Good news: preparation is hugely beneficial and makes a significant difference! With thoughtful planning, open communication, and healthy habits, children with ADHD can start the school year feeling just as focused and confident as their peers.

Structure Supports Success

Children with ADHD perform best with clearly defined expectations. That's why routines are so important, especially at the start of any major transition like the beginning of the school year.

Develop a simple schedule, including morning prep, after-school downtime, homework, and bedtime. Use a large calendar, checklist, or visual schedule to help your child see how to stay on track. Practice these routines in the immediate weeks preceding the first day of school to make their transition easier and manageable.

Break larger tasks (like "get ready for school") into smaller steps ("brush teeth," "pack lunch," "put on shoes") and celebrate small wins to build confidence.

Eat, Sleep and Move

Lifestyle habits play a big role in helping kids with ADHD as it helps manage their focus and energy levels. Experts recommend implementing new changes in routine or habits at least one week before school starts. However, if school has already begun, start new routines to kick off the school year now for optimal success.

Continued on next page

Continued from page 1

NUTRITION:
A balanced diet with protein, fiber, and healthy fats can support mood and concentration, especially for kids with ADHD. Aim to include whole foods like eggs, yogurt, fruits, and vegetables at each meal. Reduce sugary snacks and processed foods, which cause energy spikes and crashes.

HYDRATION:
Drinking water helps prevent fatigue and boosts brain function. Research shows that children with higher baseline hydration perform better on task-switching activities designed to measure cognitive flexibility. We recommend keeping a water bottle nearby throughout the day.

SLEEP:
Consistent sleep improves attention and emotional regulation. Children with ADHD often need a longer wind-down period. A calming bedtime routine, limited screen time before bed, and a dark, quiet room supports restorative sleep.

MOVEMENT:
Physical activity helps release built-up energy and improves focus. Encourage outdoor play, sports, and simple activities like walking to help reset the brain before doing homework.

Talk with Teachers Early

School support is fundamentally important, and begins with clear, direct communication. Schedule meetings with your child's teacher or support team early in the school year to identify helpful strategies. And be sure to inquire of classroom routines and discuss accommodations if your child requires them.

If your child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 Plan ensure it reflects goals, and that supportive measures are in place. If not, ask your school about how to begin the evaluation process.

Academic challenges may include staying organized, focusing during lessons, managing transitions, or completing homework. Teachers can help by offering:

- Visual instructions or written reminders
- Extra time for tests
- Quiet workspaces
- Frequent breaks

Stay in touch with your child's teachers throughout the year to keep everyone on the same page.

Medication and Monitoring

If your child uses ADHD medication, make sure prescriptions are current before the school year begins. Talk to your provider about how the medication schedule may need to be adjusted during school days versus summer.

It's also important to monitor side effects, appetite, and energy levels from your child's medication. Your pediatrician can adjust treatment plans as needed to match their learning type and daily routines.

Sibling Support and Family Dynamics

ADHD can impact the entire household. Siblings may feel frustrated or confused if rules seem different, or if more attention is given to the child with ADHD.

Creating Household Balance

- Talk openly about ADHD in age-appropriate ways
- Explain that every child has different needs—and that's okay
- Create special one-on-one time with each child, when possible
- Encourage teamwork with shared chores or routines

Most importantly, give yourself grace. Parenting a child with ADHD comes with unique joys and challenges, and you're not alone.

Resources That Can Help

BCBSIL offers behavioral health and wellness support to help families navigate ADHD and other developmental or emotional challenges. Use your **member portal** to access:

- Behavioral health specialists
- Therapy or coaching resources
- Educational guides
- Support for medication and diagnosis

You can also explore additional tools and articles at **BCBSIL Connect**, like **this post that covers the basics of ADHD**. CLICK OR TAP!

There's no single path to success, and that's okay. With encouragement, consistency, and care, children with ADHD can thrive both in and out of the classroom.

Start small. Stay flexible. Celebrate progress. And remember: you have support every step of the way.

SOURCES: *Understood*, *Child Mind Institute*, *American Society for Nutrition*

Pass this article on—help coworkers and their families get school-ready!