

# TIPS FOR EARNING AT HOME

Jeremy Toffle, M.D., Children's Physicians, West Village Pointe

## ***If you are doing eLearning at home, STICK TO THE SCRIPT.***

This means you can't let your child slack off from the work. They wouldn't be allowed to do slack off at school, so don't let them do it at home. If an assignment is due by a certain time, make sure it gets done in time for the teacher to evaluate it. As a physician who completely avoids trying to do any charting at night, I am sure many teachers out there don't want to be grading your child's math quiz at 10 p.m. because they submitted it at 9:45 p.m. I have talked with many parents this summer who allowed their children to merely scrape by on doing work at home. Don't let this happen this fall. If you are doing other homeschool plans outside of the school district, this most likely doesn't apply to you.

## ***Keep to a ROUTINE.***

If eLearning is a viable option, you should be presented with that week's work assignments in advance (hopefully no later than Sunday evening) in order to plan for the week. Keep a routine of when your child does class work, attends scheduled online lessons or lectures, eats lunch, gets physical activity or has a chance to socialize. Try creating a schedule and have it posted wherever your student will do most of their learning. This can help them stay organized and learn to take responsibility for their own education.

## ***Stay ACTIVE.***

We have seen a large increase in childhood obesity due to inactivity from missing school or after-school activities. Yes, it does happen within a matter of months! Your child may be missing out on competitive sports, recess, physical education class or other activities that would normally result in them moving their body. Simply doing one hour a day like we normally recommend is not enough to mimic the normal activity they get in school AND at home. Sitting in a chair and staring at a tablet or computer screen can increase the risk for muscle tightness and put your child in danger for symptoms like back pain, neck pain or headaches.

## ***Eat HEALTHY.***

Snacking can become a huge hurdle when sitting at home all day. Have set times of the day where eating is allowed – lunch time and maybe an afternoon snack. If your child was in school, they would not have the option to snack all the time. Keep it the same way at home. Are they thirsty? Only allow them to drink water. Most schools don't have a soda drinking fountain.

## ***Stay CREATIVE.***

It's easy to focus on subjects like English, Reading and Math, as these tend to be core subjects taught in school. However, this does not always allow your child to push their creative boundaries. Hopefully, your school's eLearning classes will include things like music, art and other subjects. You may be responsible for purchasing the materials to do this at home. Don't skip out on these subjects or minimize their importance to your child. Creativity is a huge part of helping a child's brain develop to its full potential.

## ***Stay SOCIAL.***

It is hard to be social from home on a computer. Your child's school will most likely allow time for kids to communicate via video chat to "feel" like they are involved in the virtual classroom. Yet, computer screens don't replace real-world interaction. Find other families who also choose to do eLearning. Consider them your COVID-19 buddy families. Make sure they are sticking to the same social distancing and preventative measures. If everyone is healthy and has had no contacts with other people who are sick, feel free to get together to play outside. Remember to still wear face masks if you're planning to be in close contact with one another. On that topic, make sure to practice mask-wearing at home. If your child is not used to it being on their face, they won't want to wear one if they end up going back to school part-way through the year.

## ***Check in on your child's MENTAL WELL-BEING.***

Older kids may be more difficult to monitor compared to younger ones. Sure, they get their work done and attend virtual classes, but they may stick to themselves more often and prevent you from seeing how they are truly feeling. We have seen a bump in adolescent anxiety and depression these last few months, and fears about illness, death, social isolation, lack of purpose, etc., are huge culprits. Consider including mindfulness activities into your child's routines like meditation or yoga. You may even want to do this with them. Allow your child to speak freely to you without judgment. You could even include a weekly or monthly "State of the Household" address, allowing everyone to talk about how they think things are going. If you practice this on a frequent basis, it will be easier for everyone to open up about how they are feeling in the current situation.