

A dose of Health & Wellbeing

Your bitesize guide to a healthier lifestyle,
from your school nursing team
for secondary school parents

March 2025

Happy Easter!

Read on for lots of information on how to keep yourself healthy, from your school nursing team at Berkshire Healthcare.

What do you think of our newsletter?



Do you find this newsletter helpful? What would you like to hear about?

[Let us know here](#)

Thank you!

In this newsletter

- [Exam stress](#)
- [Mental wellbeing support](#)
- [A letter from your teenager](#)
- [Eating disorders](#)
- [Sleep](#)
- [Immunisations](#)
- [Measles](#)
- [Asthma](#)
- [Hay Fever](#)
- [The importance of iron during the teenage years](#)
- [Alcohol](#)
- [Vaping](#)
- [Getting active](#)
- [Teenage Cancer Symptoms](#)
- [Forest bathing](#)
- [Where to go for medical advice](#)
- [Contacting us](#)

Exam stress

Supporting your child during exam periods is crucial, as it can make them feel very stressed and under pressure. Here are some ways to help them cope.

1. **Encourage open communication:** Create a supportive environment where they feel comfortable expressing their feelings and concerns about exams. Listen without judgment and offer empathy and understanding. Encourage them to talk about their worries and fears and reassure them that it's normal to feel stressed during exams.
2. **Provide practical support:** Help them develop effective study strategies and time management skills to reduce feelings of overwhelm. Offer to help them create study timetables so that they can break things down into manageable chunks.
3. **Foster a positive mindset:** Let them know that you appreciate their effort and progress not just the outcomes of exams. Encourage them to set realistic goals and celebrate their achievements along the way, no matter how small. Remind them that exams are just one part of their school journey.
4. **Teach stress management techniques:** Help practice techniques like deep breathing, mindfulness, meditation, or progressive muscle relaxation. This can help calm the minds, reduce physical tension, and improve focus and concentration.
5. **Encourage them to practise self-care.** Getting enough sleep, eating healthily, and taking breaks to recharge are all important.
5. **Encourage physical activity:** Regular exercise is a natural stress reliever and mood booster and it releases endorphins which can help reduce stress and anxiety. Encourage them to move more, whether it's going for a walk, practicing yoga, playing sports, or dancing.
6. **Provide emotional support:** Remind them of their strengths and capabilities, and let them know that you believe in them. Validate their feelings and remind them that it's okay to feel nervous or anxious and that they can overcome challenges.

If their exam stress becomes overwhelming and starts to impact their daily functioning or mental health, encourage them to seek support. Speak to the school or the school nurse.

[Exam Time & Exam Stress | Parents Guide To Support | YoungMinds](#)

[Exams: Supporting your Child \(charliewaller.org\)](#)

[Help your child beat exam stress - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

Mental wellbeing support

If your child is struggling and need someone to talk to, or may be feeling the pressure of upcoming exams, or simply needing help setting new goals or wanting someone to talk to, they are not alone.

Sharing can really help people feel better. Tellmi is a safe anonymous app where they can talk about absolutely anything, from anxiety to autism, self-harm to self-esteem. It offers free, confidential, text-based support to help you navigate these challenges and focus on finding a positive way forward.

[Tellmi: Better Mental Health on the App Store](#)



Does your child have an eating problem, or do you suspect one?

Supporting a child with an eating problem and understanding eating problems can be difficult and distressing for parents & carers.

Charlie Waller offer some excellent support and advice.

[Supporting a child with an eating problem](#)

Dear Parent:

This is the letter I wish I could write.

This fight we are in right now. I need it. I need this fight. I can't tell you this because I don't have the language for it and it wouldn't make sense anyway. But I need this fight. Badly. I need to hate you right now and I need you to survive it. I need you to survive my hating you and you hating me. I need this fight even though I hate it too. It doesn't matter what this fight is even about: curfew, homework, laundry, my messy room, going out, staying in, leaving, not leaving, boyfriend, girlfriend, no friends, bad friends. It doesn't matter. I need to fight you on it and I need you to fight me back.

I desperately need you to hold the other end of the rope. To hang on tightly while I thrash on the other end—while I find the handholds and footholds in this new world I feel like I am in. I used to know who I was, who you were, who we were. But right now I don't. Right now I am looking for my edges and I can sometimes only find them when I am pulling on you. When I push everything I used to know to its edge. Then I feel like I exist and for a minute I can breathe. I know you long for the sweeter kid that I was. I know this because I long for that kid too, and some of that longing is what is so painful for me right now.

I need this fight and I need to see that no matter how bad or big my feelings are—they won't destroy you or me. I need you to love me even at my worst, even when it looks like I don't love you. I need you to love yourself and me for the both of us right now. I know it sucks to be disliked and labelled the bad guy. I feel the same way on the inside, but I need you to tolerate it and get other grownups to help you. Because I can't right now. If you want to get all of your grown up friends together and have a 'surviving-your-teenager-support-group-rage-fest' that's fine with me. Or talk about me behind my back--I don't care. Just don't give up on me. Don't give up on this fight. I need it.

This is the fight that will teach me that my shadow is not bigger than my light. This is the fight that will teach me that bad feelings don't mean the end of a relationship. This is the fight that will teach me how to listen to myself, even when it might disappoint others.

And this particular fight will end. Like any storm, it will blow over. And I will forget and you will forget. And then it will come back. And I will need you to hang on to the rope again. I will need this over and over for years.

I know there is nothing inherently satisfying in this job for you. I know I will likely never thank you for it or even acknowledge your side of it. In fact I will probably criticize you for all this hard work. It will seem like nothing you do will be enough. And yet, I am relying entirely on your ability to stay in this fight. No matter how much I argue. No matter how much I sulk. No matter how silent I get.

Please hang on to the other end of the rope. And know that you are doing the most important job that anyone could possibly be doing for me right now.

Love, Your Teenager

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Sleep

It can be difficult to know how much sleep your child needs. Having good sleep habits supports good physical health, brain function & emotional wellbeing. This chart gives an idea of the amount of sleep needed for good health.

Your child's age	Recommended sleep time in 24 hours
Children 6 to 12 years	9 to 12 hours
Teenagers 13 to 18 years	8 to 10 hours

(2016 American Academy of Sleep Medicine 'Consensus Statement' regarding the recommended amount of sleep for children and young people).

- If your child has problems sleeping, listen to them. You cannot force sleep no matter how many times you tell them to 'just go to sleep'!
- Encourage them to have regular sleep and wake up times – even at the weekend.
- Encourage daily exercise and fresh air.
- Open the curtains first thing in the morning as natural daylight helps to re-set the body clock.
- Try to discourage sugary snacks. Provide healthier options such as wholemeal toast, low sugar cereal, fruit, cheese & crackers.
- Encourage them to avoid caffeine in energy drinks, cola, tea & coffee.
- Make the bedroom a relaxing space, and discourage doing anything other than sleeping in bed.
- Discuss with your child about switching off electronic devices 1 hour before bed. The blue light from screens stops the production of melatonin (the sleep hormone).
- Agree a bedtime.
- Ensure their room is dark, cool, quiet, safe and comfortable.
- Encourage them to dim the lights or use a low-lit lamp in the evening to help produce melatonin.

Helpful websites

[Teens & Young People - Teen Sleep Hub](#)

[Parents & Carers - Teen Sleep Hub](#)

[Sleep – Video 3 \(English\) \(youtube.com\)](#)

[Sleep Video -youtube](#)

[Fall asleep faster and sleep better - Every Mind Matters – NHS](#)



Is your child up to date with their immunisations?

We are still seeing local outbreaks of some nasty illnesses and diseases such as measles.

Vaccines are free, they prevent children becoming ill from infectious diseases and have helped to save millions of lives globally.

You can check your child's red book (PCHR), speak to your GP, or phone our local child health service (0300 5611851) to check whether they have received all their immunisations. If your child was vaccinated outside of the UK, you'll need to provide evidence to your GP practice so that they can check whether your child needs any further vaccinations.

To find out more visit the [NHS Vaccinations website](#) and the [Berkshire Healthcare website](#).



Travel vaccinations

If you are going abroad your child might need some additional vaccines to their routine childhood ones. Some countries have serious diseases that you need protection against before you travel.

Your GP clinic should have a practice nurse who specialises in travel immunisations, or you will need to go to a private travel clinic.

For further information and advice visit: [Travel vaccinations - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

You can find out which vaccinations you need for the areas you'll be visiting here:

- [Travel Health Pro](#)
- [NHS Fit for Travel](#)

Take proof of any previous immunisations to the appointment. There may be a cost for some vaccines. Some countries require proof of vaccination for entry. Vaccines can take 6-8 weeks to build immunity so give yourself plenty of time.

Measles is on the increase

Measles is a highly infectious disease that can lead to serious problems like pneumonia, meningitis, and even long-term disability or death. Symptoms include a high fever, sore red watery eyes and a blotchy red-brown rash. It is easy to catch when in close contact with others like at school.

Please check in your child's red book or with their GP to make sure they are up to date with 2 doses of the MMR vaccine. If they have missed either of these 2 doses, please book an appointment with your GP.

For more information you can email:

westschoolimms@berkshire.nhs.uk (For schools in Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham).

eastschoolimms@berkshire.nhs.uk (For schools in Bracknell).

Or call: 0300 365 0077

And for more information visit:

[MMR \(measles, mumps and rubella\) vaccine - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[MMR Vaccine \(Measles, Mumps and Rubella Vaccine\) | Vaccine Knowledge Project \(ox.ac.uk\)](#)



Asthma

Although a very common medical condition it's important to make sure asthma is properly controlled to prevent problems and/or a severe asthma attack which could be life threatening. It is really important that:

- Your child has an asthma care plan in school.
- Your child attends an annual asthma review
- You know what your child's triggers are
- You check your child is using their inhalers as directed
- You regularly check your child's inhaler technique [How to use your inhaler | Asthma + Lung UK](#)
- You recognise if a reliever inhaler is being overused (using 2 or more per year is an indicator of poorly controlled asthma) – a sign your child's asthma is not under control so further medical attention is required
- Ensure your home is smoke free
- Seek support if your home is damp or cold: [Helpline | Asthma + Lung UK](#)

Hay fever (allergic rhinitis)

We're getting into hay fever season again. Hay fever is an allergic reaction where the body's immune system reacts to allergens that are in the air.

Contact with an allergen causes the body to respond by releasing a chemical called histamine which is what causes symptoms such as itchy eyes, sneezing, coughing, and runny nose.

There are two types of hay fever:

Seasonal	Perennial
Symptoms usually occur between March and September	Symptoms all year round
When pollen counts are high	Related to household allergens
Pollen from trees, plants, weeds or all 3	Pets, dust, mould spores

It is helpful to know which type causes your child's symptoms as this will help them manage the symptoms better.

Things you can do to help:

- Encourage your child to wear wrap-around sunglasses to prevent pollen from entering the eyes.
- Put a petroleum jelly (such as Vaseline) around their nostrils to stop pollen from going up the nose.
- Keep windows and doors shut to keep pollen out.
- Get them to shower at the end of every day to remove pollen from hair and body.
- Keep your child indoors when possible.
- Make sure your home is hoovered regularly and dusted with a damp cloth.
- Add pollen filters for the car air vents.
- Avoid drying clothes outside as pollen can be blown onto them.
- Make sure they stay away from cigarette smoke as this can make symptoms worse.
- Avoid cut grass, especially playing on it.
- Avoid having fresh flowers in the home.

[Hay Fever | Allergy UK | National Charity](#)

[Hay fever - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

The importance of iron during the teenage years

As a teenager there is a big increase in iron requirements for the body. Even more so for girls due to the loss of iron during a period. About 50% of teenage girls do not get enough iron in their diet.

Iron makes red blood cells which carry oxygen around the body. A lack of iron can lead to iron deficiency anaemia.

Common symptoms of iron deficiency anaemia:

Tiredness, a lack of energy, shortness of breath, heart palpitations, poor appetite, frequent infections, paler than usual skin.

Less common symptoms:

Hearing issues such as ringing, buzzing, hissing sounds. Food tastes strange, sore tongue, cold hands & feet, hair losses, nail changes, restless leg syndrome, feeling itchy, wanting to eat things that are not food such as paper, or ice.

See your GP if your child has these symptoms.

Good sources of iron:

- Red meat
- Liver
- Wholegrains such as wholemeal bread
- Iron fortified breakfast cereals
- Dark green vegetables such as spinach, kale, watercress
- Beans: kidney beans, chickpeas
- Dried fruits: apricots, raisins, figs
- Nuts: cashews, pine nuts, hazelnut, peanuts
- Seeds: sesame, pumpkin

Eating foods that are high in vitamin C like citrus fruits (eg oranges) helps the body absorb iron from food. Tannins, phytates and calcium in drinks/foods like tea, coffee, milk and bran can make it hard for the body to absorb iron so try to make sure your child avoids these drinks at mealtimes.

More information

[Vitamins and minerals - Iron - NHS](#)

[Nutrition for teenagers - British Nutrition Foundation](#)

Alcohol

Alcohol can be risky, as the effects it will have varies from person to person. As parents/carers it is important to know all the facts.

[Teenage drinking | Drinkaware](#)
[Alcohol | Effects of Alcohol | FRANK](#)
[Talk About Alcohol](#)

Vaping

Vapes, e-cigarettes, & electronic cigarettes are battery powered devices which allow someone to inhale a flavoured vapour. Most contain high levels of nicotine as they were developed to help people give up smoking. Nicotine is addictive so non- smokers are advised not to use them but switching to vapes can help smokers quit.

No one yet knows exactly what the long-term effects of vaping will be especially as they vary so much in level of nicotine. Other toxic ingredients such as lead, nickel, chromium and other chemicals can be found in illicit ones.

Check out how much you know about vaping there are a lot of myths.

[Vaping Quiz](#)
[Vaping myths and the facts - Better Health – NHS](#)
[Honest information about drugs | FRANK](#)

Getting active



Sport In Mind

[Sport in Mind](#) run a [Youth Programme](#) offering sessions for young people to help them feel empowered to find their voice, understand their feelings, and make the vital connection between sport and positive mental health.

They also offer an NCS accredited volunteer programme for students aged 16-17 where they can use their voice to create positive change in the community. This programme is not just about sports; it's personal growth, mental wellbeing, and preparing for their future.

[Sport in Mind accredited Youth Volunteer Programme | Sport in Mind](#)

Signs of cancer

There are lots of different signs & symptoms of cancer. It is always important to get anything you are worried about checked out, but especially if your child has any of these symptoms that last a while and you can't explain them.

[Signs of cancer | Teenage Cancer Trust](#)



Mole changes

This could be a change in the size, shape, colour or texture of a mole. Or if it starts bleeding.



Unexplained weight change

This could be weight loss or gain when you haven't changed your diet, how much you're exercising or any medication you're on.



Persistent pain

This is severe pain that doesn't go away with painkillers.



Unexplained tiredness

You might feel completely exhausted all of the time - even a good night's sleep doesn't help.



Lumps and swellings

Lumps and swellings can be anywhere on your body.

If you're worried speak to your GP, or scan the QR code to find out more. #CheckItOut



teenagecancertrust.org/signs



Forest bathing

In Japan there is a practice known as Shinrin-Yoku which translates to 'Forest Bathing'. It is the term given to quietly relaxing in nature which can be incredibly beneficial for our emotional, physical, social and mental health. It has been gaining attention since the 1980s when it started being used to counteract the demands of the modern-day stresses.

Research has proven that by using our senses and connecting with nature can:

1. Lower stress levels
2. Boost immunity
3. Fight disease
4. Lower blood pressure
5. Improve mood levels
6. Increased creativity
7. Aid in the recovery process from illness
8. Reduce feelings of anger, sadness and anxiety
9. Improves focus, concentration and memory



The main principles are to walk slowly and silently. The recommended time is two hours however, research has shown that just 10 minutes a day can be beneficial for you.

It is thought that there are three stages of a forest mind (attention, awareness and answers). Translated this simply means the process of simple activities which allows us to relax, engage with nature leading to a greater awareness and true understanding of life.

- Take your time and allow yourself to immerse yourself in the experience.
- Resist the temptation to use electronic devices.
- Focus on your breathing and the quality of breaths involved.
- Pick a quiet time of day when you are sure there will not be lots of noise or activity.
- Engage your senses – what can you see, smell or hear?
- Take a blanket, a book and allow your mind to free itself!
- Think about your safety.
- Learn about what is on your doorstep. Learn the different types of birds or tree identification.

Find your nearest walk here: [Forest Bathing Finder](#) |

[Your guide to forest bathing | Forestry England](#)

[Forest bathing | Mindfulness | National Trust](#)

[Forest Bathing – What, How, Where? A beginner's guide | Healing Forest](#)

Know where to go if you need medical advice



Minor cuts and grazes
Bruises and minor sprains
Coughs and colds

Self Care

Stock your
medicine cabinet



Minor illnesses
Headache
Stomach upsets
Bites and stings

Pharmacy



Feeling unwell?
Unsure?
Anxious?
Need help?

NHS 111



Persistent symptoms
Chronic pain
Long term conditions

GP Advice

Out of Hours call 111



Choking
Chest pain
Blacking out
Serious blood loss

A&E or 999

Emergencies only



If you have a child aged 5-19 you can contact a member of the school nursing team by text message for confidential, anonymous help and advice.

We can offer advice and support on many topics like:

- Sleep
- Low mood
- Self harm
- Body changes
- Emotional health and wellbeing
- Healthy eating
- Anxiety and stress
- Drugs, alcohol and smoking

Text: 07312 263194

Open 9am - 4:30pm Mon-Fri
(excluding bank holidays)

How to contact your School Nursing team

We are available Monday to Friday 9am-5pm.
There is reduced cover during school holidays

Bracknell Forest

0300 365 6000

BracknellForest.SN@berkshire.nhs.uk

Reading

0118 9047320

csnreading@berkshire.nhs.uk

Wokingham

0118 9047330

csnwokingham@berkshire.nhs.uk

West Berkshire

0118 9047325

csnwestberks@berkshire.nhs.uk

Visit our website

cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/school-nursing

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