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## What to Do if Your Child Refuses to Go to School

School refusal is the serious problem of a child refusing to go to school. It is stressful for the kids, the parents and the teachers. Children with school refusal behavior usually suffer from mood disorders and anxiety. They differ from children who are truant or have school phobia.

School refusal behavior is a complex problem. About 1% to 8% of all school-aged children suffer from school refusal behavior. It is most common in children ages 5 and 6 and 10, 11 and 12.

School refusal must be addressed as soon as possible. It requires help from doctors, mental health professionals, school staff and family. *Kids who do not attend school develop short term and long term problems*.

Symptoms of school refusal usually start gradually. It may begin after a holiday, an illness or a vacation. Sometimes, it begins after a stressful event at home or at school. During school, a child may leave class often to visit the school nurse. In the morning, a child may start to school but have problems the closer she gets to school. A parent may notice that the child has difficulty the night before going to school. He may cry, have temper tantrums, or refuse to sleep. Other children refuse to go to school.

Sometimes children with school refusal behavior complain of illness dizziness, headaches, chest pains, abdominal pain, nausea, or back and joint pain. They may feel anxious, shaky or have vomiting or diarrhea. Some become sad and withdraw from family and friends. Others may threaten harm to themselves.

Education is important. Children must attend school, even young children. Prevent long term problems by helping your child find success in school.



## If your child refuses to go to school:

- Avoid writing excuses for your child to stay home.
- Let your child know that staying home from school is not an option.
- Find help immediately.
- Talk with your child's teachers, school counselor and principal. Work together as a team to find and solve any problems.
- Take your child to his medical doctor. Rule out a medical problem.
- Take your child to see a psychologist or psychiatrist.
   They can diagnosis and help you and your child develop a treatment plan.
- Tell all the doctors about any stressful family or school problems or events.

Call the Parent Help Line. We listen. We can find you help. 1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week or log onto www.parenthelpline.org