**How to Help Prepare Your Child to Return to In-Person Schooling**

**Establish a Routine**

After months of remote learning and the summer break, many children will struggle with getting into a new routine. Create a calendar that outlines which days are online versus in-person learning, and then breaks down what will happen during each of those days. This provides structure to the day and children will feel less anxious.

**Practice, Practice, Practice**

Teach your child to wash their hands: before they leave and when they get home; before/after eating; after using the bathroom; and after sneezing or blowing their nose.

Most importantly, help your child get used to wearing a mask. Build up their mask tolerance by slowly increasing the length of time your child wears a mask. Then, by the time school starts, wearing a mask will feel more natural, which will help with the adjustment to the classroom.

**Managing Your Child’s Anxiety**

Even in the absence of a pandemic, the return to school can trigger anxiety in children and adolescents. Signs of anxiety include: a decline in academic performance; change in eating habits; the inability to fall asleep until very late at night, and then the struggle to wake up; restlessness; avoiding friends; a change in mood such as irritability, tantrums, or emotional outbursts; and stomach aches, nausea, and headaches.

With the pandemic, some children will be scared about going back to school, being around friends, or being outdoors at all—especially without a parent there to provide reassurance. Develop a coping plan that includes the following tactics:

• help your child identify their worries and fears, and then provide child-friendly, fact-based information to address those issues;

• reassure your child that their teachers and parents will be there to help;

• encourage your child to take “coping breaks” when they feel anxious, such as deep breathing, counting to a certain number, imagining a favorite place, or repeating coping statements such as, “It’s normal to be nervous, but I’m OK, and I’ll make it through the day;”

• Encourage your child to tell you about how their worries affected them at school, and seek out extra help from the school psychologist, school social worker or teacher, if needed.

Full article can be found at: https://nyulangone.org/news/preparing-students-safe-return-school-during-covid-19