

# Together For Jackson County Kids

## September 22 Family Day!

*Family Day – A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children*<sup>™</sup> is a national movement launched by CASA in 2001 to remind parents that frequent family **Dinners Make A Difference!** While there are no silver bullets – substance abuse can strike any family regardless of ethnicity, affluence, age or gender – the parental engagement fostered at the dinner table can be a simple, effective tool to help prevent substance abuse in kids.

*Family Day* began as a grassroots initiative and has grown to become a nationwide celebration. In fact, in 2007 President Bush, all 50 Governors and almost 800 Mayors and County Executives proclaimed and supported *Family Day!*

“America’s drug problem is not going to be solved in courtrooms or legislative hearing rooms by judges and politicians. It will be solved in living rooms and dining rooms and across kitchen tables – by parents and families.”

Joseph A. Califano, Jr.

## About CASA

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University is the only nation-wide organization that brings together under one roof all the professional disciplines needed to study and combat abuse of all substances – alcohol, nicotine as well as illegal, prescription and performance enhancing drugs – in all sectors of society.

Founded in 1992 by Former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Joseph A. Califano, Jr., the non-profit organization aims to inform Americans of the economic and social costs of substance abuse and its impact on their lives, as well as, remove the stigma of substance abuse and replace shame and despair with hope.

CASA has assembled an interdisciplinary staff of more than 50 professionals with post-graduate and doctorate degrees, experience and expertise in various fields including substance abuse and addiction, communications, criminology, education, epidemiology, government, law, journalism, psychology, public administration, health and policy, social work, sociology and statistics.

More than a decade of research by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse ([CASA](#)) at Columbia University has consistently found that the more often kids eat dinner with their families, the less likely they are to smoke, drink or use drugs.

## Tools You Can Use

Family Day offers the following tools and resources for parents.

- [Parent Power – a guide to raising your children drug free](#) is a new book being authored to help parents deal with real world situations they face in raising teenage sons and daughters free of drug and alcohol abuse.
- [Talking to your kids](#) is a list of tips on talking to your kids about drugs and alcohol.
- Concerned your child might be experimenting with drugs and/or alcohol? We can offer some insight into [signs and symptoms of substance abuse](#).
- We offer [media files, brochures, magnets, and more](#) related to *Family Day* 2008.



[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

Our [Family Dinner Kit](#) provides useful items to make your *Family Day* celebration a success!  
Concerned your child might be experimenting with drugs or alcohol? Below are some signs to look out for:

## **Changes in Behavior**

- Missing school, declining grades or discipline problems
- Dropping old friends and getting new ones
- Dropping activities such as sports
- Increased secrecy
- Unusual borrowing of money
- Sudden mood changes, aggressiveness, irritability
- Restlessness, excessively talkative, rapid speech
- Irresponsible behavior, poor judgment
- Depression
- Forgetfulness, slurred speech, or difficulty expressing thoughts
- Lack of coordination, poor balance

## **More Direct Evidence of Substance Use:**

- Increased use of incense, room deodorant or perfumes (to hide smoke or chemical odors)
- Increased use of eye drops (to mask bloodshot eyes or dilated pupils)
- New use of mouthwash or breath mints (to cover the smell of alcohol)
- Drug paraphernalia such as pipes, rolling papers
- Increased accumulation of inhalable products such as hairspray, nail polish, correction fluid, etc.
- Missing prescription drugs – such as narcotics, stimulants and mood stabilizers

### **Calendar of Events**

September 3 Leadership Team Meeting 3:15pm

September 12 Tobacco Free Coalition Meeting 1pm UWEX

September 18 TFJCK Meeting 3:30pm

September 22 Family Day

October 23-31 Red Ribbon Week

# Kids and Stress?

As providers and caretakers, adults tend to view the world of children as happy and carefree. After all, kids don't have jobs to keep or bills to pay, so what could they possibly have to worry about? Plenty! Even very young children have worries and feel stress to some degree. Stress is a function of the demands placed on us and our ability to meet them.

**Sources of Stress** Pressures often come from outside sources (such as family, friends, or school), but they can also come from within. The pressure we place on ourselves can be most significant because there is often a discrepancy between what we think we ought to be doing and what we are actually doing in our lives. Stress can affect anyone — even kids — who feels overwhelmed. Toddlers, for example, may be anxious if the person they most need to feel safe — a parent — isn't around enough. In preschoolers, separation from parents is the greatest cause of anxiety. As kids get older, academic and social pressures (especially the quest to fit in) create stress. In addition, well-meaning parents sometimes unwittingly add to their kids' stress. High-achieving parents might have great expectations for their kids, who may lack their parents' motivation or capabilities. Parents who push their kids to excel in sports or who enroll them in too many activities can cause stress and frustration if their kids don't share their goals.

Many kids are too busy to have time to play creatively or relax after school. Kids who complain about the number of activities they're involved in or refuse to go to them may be signaling that they're overscheduled. Talk with your kids about how they feel about extracurricular activities. If they complain, discuss the pros and cons of quitting one activity. If quitting isn't an option, explore ways to help manage your child's time and responsibilities so that they don't create so much anxiety.

Kids' stress may be intensified by more than just what's happening in their own lives. Do your kids hear you talking about troubles at work, worrying about a relative's illness, or fighting with your spouse about financial matters? Parents should watch how they discuss such issues when their kids are near because children will pick up on their parents' anxieties and start to worry themselves. World news can cause stress. Kids who see disturbing images on TV or hear talk of natural disasters, war, and terrorism may worry about their own safety and that of the people they love. Talk to your kids about what they see and hear, and monitor what they watch on TV so that you can help them understand what's going on. Also, be aware of complicating factors, such as an illness, death of a loved one, or a divorce. When these are added to the everyday pressures kids face, the stress is magnified. Even the most amicable divorce can be a difficult experience for kids because their basic security system — their family — is undergoing a tough change. Separated or divorced parents should never put kids in a position of having to choose sides or expose them to negative comments about the other spouse.

**Symptoms of Stress** While it's not always easy to recognize when kids are stressed out, **short-term behavioral changes** — such as mood swings, acting out, changes in sleep patterns, or bedwetting — can be indications. Some kids experience physical effects, including stomachaches and headaches. Others have trouble concentrating or completing schoolwork. Still others become withdrawn or spend a lot of time alone. Younger children may show signs of reacting to stress by picking up new habits like thumb sucking, hair twirling, or nose picking; older kids may begin to lie, bully, or defy authority. A child who is stressed may also have nightmares, difficulty leaving you, overreactions to minor problems, and drastic changes in academic performance.

**Reducing Stress** How can you help kids cope with stress? Proper rest and good nutrition can boost coping skills, as can good parenting. Make time for your kids each day. Whether they need to talk or just be in the same room with you, make yourself available. Even as kids get older, quality time is important. It's really hard for some people to come home after work, get down on the floor, and play with their kids or just talk to them about their day — especially if they've had a stressful day themselves. But expressing interest in your kids' days shows that they're important to you. Help your child cope with stress by talking about what may be causing it. Together, you can come up with a few solutions like cutting back on after-school activities, spending more time talking with parents or teachers, developing an exercise regimen, or keeping a journal. You can also help by anticipating potentially stressful situations and preparing kids for them. For example, let a child know ahead of time that a doctor's appointment is coming up and talk about what will happen there. Remember that some level of stress is normal; let kids know that it's OK to feel angry, scared, lonely, or anxious and that other people share those feelings.

**Helping Your Child** When kids can't or won't discuss these issues, try talking about your own concerns. This shows that you're willing to tackle tough topics and are available to talk with when they're ready. If a child shows symptoms that concern you and is unwilling to talk, consult a counselor or other mental health specialist. Books can help young kids identify with characters in stressful situations and learn how they cope. Check out *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst; *Tear Soup* by Pat Schweibert, Chuck DeKlyen, and Taylor Bills; and *Dinosaurs Divorce* by Marc Brown and Laurene Krasny Brown.

Most parents have the skills to deal with their child's stress. The time to seek professional attention is when any change in behavior persists, when stress is causing serious anxiety, or when the behavior is causing significant problems in functioning at school or at home. If you need help finding resources for your child, consult your doctor or the counselors and teachers at school.

Reviewed by: [David V. Sheslow, PhD](#), and [Meredith Lutz Stehl, PhD](#)

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# Healthier Versions of Kids Favorite Meals: Chicken Tenders

By using boneless, skinless chicken with high-fiber cereal and an egg substitute, you can make a tasty, crunchy healthier version of this favorite kids' meal. And you can make it in batches and freeze it for reheating for future meals. It goes great with a cup of skim milk and cut-up veggies.

## This Recipe

1 4-oz. boneless, skinless chicken breast, rinsed, patted dry, and sliced into strips

1/4 c. egg substitute or skim milk

1/3 c. flaked, high-fiber cereal, crushed

## Traditional Recipe

3 oz. cooked chicken fingers, typical fast food preparation

## This Recipe

227 calories

30 g protein

3 g fat

0.8 g sat. fat

20 g carbohydrate

8 g fiber

75 mg cholesterol

239 mg sodium

44 mg calcium

10 mg iron

185 mcg folic acid

## Traditional Recipe

255 calories

15 g protein

15 g fat

3 g sat. fat

15 g carbohydrate

0 g fiber

75 mg cholesterol

670 mg sodium

2 mg calcium

4 mg iron

n/a mcg folic acid

## Directions:

Preheat oven to 350° Fahrenheit (176° Celsius).

Dip chicken strips into egg substitute or skim milk.

Roll dipped chicken in high-fiber cereal to coat.

Place coated strips on non-stick baking sheet.

Bake for 18 to 20 minutes, turning after 9 minutes, until chicken is done (white, not pink, inside).

Nutritional analysis may vary depending on ingredient brands used.

## Variations and suggestions:

- Boneless, skinless chicken tenders can be substituted. Use 4 1-oz. tenders. Reheat in conventional oven for about 20 minutes at 350° Fahrenheit (176° Celsius). Do not microwave to reheat.

Reviewed by: [Mary L. Gavin, MD](#)

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