

## August/Sept Newsletter



There have been some recent high-profile cases of **bullying** in the news. As your children head back to school, the American Academy of Pediatrics has some tips on how to spot and deal with bullying:

“Bullying is a pervasive issue,” says Joseph Wright, M.D., M.P.H., FAAP, chair of the American Academy of Pediatrics’ Violence Prevention Subcommittee. “Studies show that about 30 percent of students in grades 6 to 10 are involved in bullying either as a victim or as a bully, sometimes as both.” Even kids who aren’t actively involved in bullying are likely to feel an emotional tug from incidents they see or hear about at school, on the bus, around the neighborhood, or on the Internet.

For parents, the first step in stopping bullying is becoming aware that the problem exists. Kids have often been warned not to “snitch,” or the bullying will get worse. They may blame themselves or be too embarrassed to talk about it. Many convince themselves that there is nothing a parent can do anyway. That’s why it’s important to keep the lines of communications open and watch for even the subtle [signs of bullying](#), which can include:

- Tattered or torn clothes
- Frequent reports that money or valuables were lost or stolen at school
- An abrupt lack of interest in school-related activities your son or daughter usually enjoys
- A sudden slip in grades (because bullied kids are often too anxious stay focused on school work)
- Taking different routes to and from school
- Missing the school bus so you have to drop off and pick up
- Extreme hunger after school (harassment may involve bullies confiscating lunch/lunch money)
- Racing to bathroom when getting home (avoiding school bathrooms because that’s where bullying takes place)
- Being withdrawn or lonely
- Difficulty sleeping, frequent headaches and/or stomachaches
- Talking negatively about peers, or not talking about peers or school at all

[Remedying the Situation](#): Once you get your preteen or teen to open up and talk about bullying, it’s important to be supportive and to reassure your child that he or she is not the problem, advises Robert Sege, MD, MPH, FAAP, director of ambulatory pediatrics at Boston Medical Center. “It’s the bully who has the problem, not your child.” Experts also warn against telling your kid to fight back with physical violence. “The focus should be on safety,” says Dr. Wright. “Young people should not take situations into their own hands by retaliating. Columbine is an egregious example of responding to bullying at an extreme level.”

[Don't keep it a secret](#): One of the most important actions you can take to stop the abuse is letting school leaders know there is a problem and advocating for your child. “Go in as

calmly as possible and with a list of the exact events – this bullying activity happened on Thursday, these words were said on Friday,” explains Stan Davis, expert on bullying and school guidance counselor. “Then ask what the school is going to do make sure it doesn’t happen anymore – that being slammed into lockers or being called names about ethnic origin are unacceptable. Tell them you’re looking for some level of supervision so your child will be safe. Most schools will respond positively.”

Here are some other things you can do to help your son or daughter build self-esteem and form healthy peer relationships after experiencing bullying:

- **Explore social opportunities away from the bully.** Start with activities offered by local park and recreation programs, sports leagues, boys and girls clubs, the Y, museums, religious groups, and nature trails. The idea is to get your adolescent involved in something where she can be a part of the social mainstream and make friends.
- **Encourage hobbies.** “Whether it’s drawing, playing the guitar, running, brushing down a horse, or doing origami, you can always make yourself feel better by spending a half-hour on a hobby,” says Davis. “It’s something to do that can help a person heal him- or herself.”
- **Suggest journaling.** If the bullying behavior has stopped but your child is still having emotional troubles, it can be helpful for kids to keep a journal of what happened and how they felt about it.
- **Teach relaxation techniques.** Deep breathing is especially useful for sensitive kids who get upset and cry easily. So is muscle relaxation.
- **Plan more family time.** More time together helps kids of all ages become stronger, happier, and more resilient. Friday night pizza, bicycle rides, walks around the block, and watching favorite TV shows and movies together are few simple ways to create more family time.

Ultimately, a coordinated effort at school and on the home front should help a bullied child feel safe again. Of course, if emotional troubles continue, talk with your pediatrician for advice and a referral to a mental health professional. In extreme cases, it may also be necessary to switch schools so your troubled adolescent can literally leave the past behind.

### **ACCC Reminders:**

Please give us 2-3 business days to complete forms for school/sports. We always try to get them back to you as soon as possible.



### **AFTER HOURS CLINIC**

As always, our after-hours clinic, Kids Time Pediatrics, is available to you when our office is closed. KTP is open from 6-9 pm on weekdays and 1-7 pm on weekends if your child needs to be seen urgently. Their address is 5252 Roswell Road NE, Atlanta GA 30342. Phone is 404-943-1979.