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### Back to School!

Summer is winding down which means many things are changing and a new routine is beginning. The start of a new academic year can be stressful which can cause difficulties for parents and students without having a plan. Changing a few habits and incorporating some helpful tips will increase the likelihood of a healthy start to the school year. Stress can be reduced by getting back to a daily routine which will create habits and reduce the time needed to think and plan everything out.

Sleep is very important for everyone, but it is even more important for children, youth, and adolescents. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) recommends that children six to 12 require a minimum of nine hours of sleep per day, while adolescents require a minimum of eight hours of sleep per day. A helpful tip and habit to incorporate is shifting bedtimes and wake times well before the beginning of the school year to meet the minimum sleep requirements. Shifting bedtimes and wake times to account for the recommended amount of sleep required well before the school year starts will ensure that the child's health, behavior, and school performance is not negatively impacted. To maximize a child's full sleep potential, it is important to go to bed at the same time everyday as well as wake up around the same time every day.

The next tip to incorporate for a healthy start to the school year is to create a bedtime routine and before school morning routine. A bedtime routine is important because it signals to the brain to wind down for the day which prepares the body for a good night's sleep and recharges for the next day. Simple habits that can be incorporated for a bedtime routine include reading a book before bed, journaling, meditation, personal hygiene, etc. The routine should be relaxing and should help the child transition from daytime activities to preparation for sleep. A before school morning routine is equally as important because it prepares the student for the day ahead and success. A morning routine can be just as simple as a bedtime routine, but the most important aspect of a morning routine is eating a nutritious breakfast before the school day. A nutritious breakfast includes whole grains, fruits, low-fat milk or dairy, and protein options. Other helpful tips for a morning routine include having school supplies and backpack ready the night before, dressing in weather-appropriate clothes, brushing teeth and hair, preparing lunch, setting out any items needed for after-school activities, etc.

The recommended amount of sleep and daily routines are just a couple helpful tips and habits to incorporate into the new academic school year.

To find out more information or want to learn more visit <https://food.unl.edu> or call Buffalo County Extension at 308-236-1235.

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