



Pediatric Clinic  
PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUTS

## Stresses Of Parenting

Being a parent can be a true joy but it isn't easy. Parenting is a round-the-clock job with many concerns and demands that can be very stressful. When you factor in caring for and worrying about the health of a child or newborn with medical problems, the stress increases.

To effectively manage the stress of being a parent and the caregiver of a sick child, it is important to recognize the accumulation of stress from each role.

### WHAT TO DO ABOUT STRESS:

- Take a breather (deep breathing can quickly and effectively relieve stress).
- Take a break (even a short break of 5 minutes can provide stress-relieving benefits).
- Make time for yourself (provide regularly scheduled breaks by having a reliable and trusted person help with parenting duties or enroll your child in a certified daycare program).
- Make time for exercise and regular daily activities.
- For severe stress, seek the help of a physician or other health care professional.

### SIGNS OF TOO MUCH STRESS:

- Feeling tired and irritable most of the time.
- Feelings of being down or low that last more than a few days.
- More than usual difficulty concentrating and making decisions.
- Difficulty enjoying regular activities that used to give pleasure.
- Feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, hopelessness, or guilt.
- Loss of appetite.
- Sleeping problems.
- Loss of sexual desire.

If you are experiencing any of the above problems, which may also be symptoms of depression see your doctor.

### HOW TO MINIMIZE STRESSES OF PARENTING:

- Share household responsibilities and chores with other members of the household (spouse, partner, even older children when appropriate).
- Set realistic rules for children and stick by them.
- Try to maintain a fairly regular schedule for children, including set meal times and bed times.
- Have realistic expectations of your children's behavior and respect their individuality.
- Don't sweat the small stuff. Many little problems and mistakes that children make are not worth getting upset over —just let them go.

## **WHERE TO GO FOR HELP:**

See your physician if you are having serious difficulty dealing with stress.  
Create a network of caring friends.  
Contact local mental health services.  
Contact your local religious organization to ask about counseling services.  
Contact local family services agencies.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

American Academy of Pediatrics  
(Send a SASE to:)  
Child Care: What's Best for Your Family?  
Attn.: Publications Department HE0028  
141 Northwest Point Blvd.  
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007-1098 or  
[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

National Association of Child Care  
Resource and Referral Agencies  
Child Care Aware: 800/424-2246

Parents Anonymous  
909/621-6184 or  
[www.parentsanonymous-natl.org](http://www.parentsanonymous-natl.org)