

Goal #1 LESS STRESS FOR KIDS

Parents may think their children have nothing to worry about. But experts say kids now experience unprecedented stress levels. A recent study by researchers at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland looked at the profiles of thousands of children between 1952 and 1993 and found that as crime and divorce rates increased and other social changes occurred, childhood anxiety increased. In fact, modern kids have anxiety levels that match those of children who were psychiatric patients in the 1950s.

It's up to you to recognize stress and help your kids cope. Stress that goes unchecked can lead to anxiety and depression, and contribute to ailments

like asthma, researchers say. Here are some ways to help.

1 Watch for signs. A stressed child can't always communicate her state of mind with words, experts say. Watch for physical signs of stress instead: nausea, bedwetting, sleep difficulties, a decrease or increase in appetite, withdrawal from activities, irritability, sadness, or a decline in school work.

2 Help your child open up. Spend some time listening to your child every day. "Kids need to know that their parents respect them and will listen when they need to talk," says child-development specialist Gail Gross, Ph.D. Don't belittle her concerns. A problem that doesn't seem significant to you can be staggering for a kid. When your child comes to you with a

problem, make an effort to use empathetic language, Pierce says. Avoid phrases like "That's no big deal," and instead say things like "That must be hard for you."

3 Make mornings smoother. "Many children go to school stressed out from getting ready," says Pierce. "I encourage parents to help their kids get organized the night before: picking clothes, packing backpacks and setting them by the door. That way everyone gets a good night's rest and the morning isn't so dreadful." All kids can benefit from this type of structure, but it can be particularly helpful for kids with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

4 Keep your stress to yourself. Gross believes kids are being forced

GETTING STARTED

Natural Remedies for Kids

ANDREA CANDEE, A SOUTH SALEM, N.Y.-BASED HERBALIST AND co-author of *Gentle Healing for Baby and Child* (Pocket Books, 2001), recommends these treatments for minor ailments.

CUTS AND SCRAPES Slather honey, a mild disinfectant, on minor cuts and scrapes. (Don't let children younger than 1 year old eat honey; it contains spores that can cause botulism in babies.) If a cut is bleeding, apply a thick coat of powdered cayenne pepper directly to the cut. The pepper contains soothing minerals that prevent it from burning the skin, and its antimicrobial, astringent, and clotting properties will help clean and close the cut.

LICE Combine 2 teaspoons tea tree essential oil (*Melaleuca alternifolia*), 2 teaspoons eucalyptus essential oil (*Eucalyptus*



When your child has a cut, cayenne pepper can ease the ouch.

globulus), ½ teaspoon rosemary essential oil (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), ½ teaspoon lavender essential oil (*Lavandula angustifolia*), and ½ cup olive oil. Before bed, apply a generous amount to your child's hair and scalp, and cover with a shower cap. (Protect bed linens with a towel.) In the morning, comb hair with a lice comb and wash hair with a shampoo that contains tea tree oil. Repeat nightly until the lice and eggs disappear.

NOSEBLEEDS For a light nosebleed, try the paper-bag trick: Tear off a piece of brown paper bag and have your child place it between his upper lip and gums. Leave it there until the bleeding stops. (Candee admits that no one is exactly sure why this folk remedy works, but it does.)

SPLINTERS Enzymes in ripe bananas produce a drawing action that can extract foreign matter from your child's skin. Cut a piece of banana peel from a very ripe banana and tape it to the skin with surgical tape, pulp side in. Leave it on overnight and in the morning, the splinter will be on the surface of the skin or in the peel. This also works for thorns and other foreign matter.

—Julia Tolliver Maranan