

## Is Your Child Too Busy?

Clearly, some kids have too much to do and not enough time to do it. And it's hard to tell if it's the parents pushing or the kids trying to keep up with their peers. Whatever the culprit, one thing's for sure - something's got to give for some kids. Is *your* child too busy?

### Why Are Kids So Busy?

Some parents may feel that they have to keep their kids constantly occupied, rather than give them a chance to play, explore, and learn on their own. Parents may also feel the need to sign their kids up for one more class or team for fear that their children may be missing something the other kids are getting.

Even when intentions are good, though, a child can easily become overscheduled. The pressure to participate in a handful of activities all the time and to "keep up with the Joneses" can be physically and emotionally exhausting, for parents and kids alike.

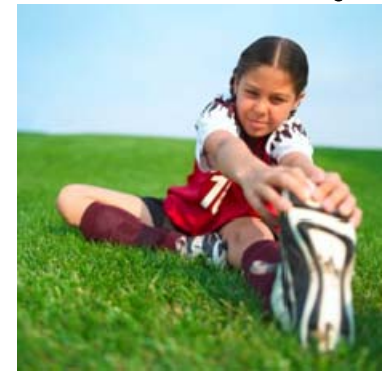
Of course, organized activities and sports are beneficial for kids for a number of reasons. They foster social skills and provide opportunities for play and [exercise](#). They promote cultural enrichment and teach sportsmanship, self-discipline, and conflict resolution. Most of all, they're fun! The key is keeping them that way, and making sure that kids - and their parents - aren't becoming overwhelmed.

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Our mission is to promote family involvement by providing information on topics of interest in early childhood education to the parent as the child's first and most important teacher.

# How Busy is Too Busy?



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## How Can I Tell if My Child Is Too Busy?

Sooner or later, too-busy children will begin to show signs of being overscheduled. Every child is different, but overscheduled kids may feel tired, anxious, or [depressed](#). They may complain of [headaches](#) and stomachaches, which may be due to [stress](#), missed [meals](#), or lack of [sleep](#).

Over-scheduling can take a toll on kids' friendships and social lives. Family life may also suffer when too many people are running in too many directions. When one parent is driving to basketball practice and the other is carpooling to dance class, meals are missed. As a result, some families rarely eat dinner together and parents and kids may not be taking the time to stay connected. Plus, the weekly grind of chauffeuring kids all over the place and getting to one class, game, or practice after another can be downright tiresome and stressful for parents.

### Tips for Busy Families

Even those parents who try to help their children cut back on some activities can run up against coaches who won't tolerate absences and kids who want to keep up with their friends. However, it's important for parents to step back and make sure that their children aren't experiencing activity overload.

The key is to schedule things in moderation and choose activities with your child's age, temperament, interests, and abilities in mind. If something's too advanced, the experience may be frustrating. If it isn't engaging, your child will probably be bored. And if your child doesn't want to do it in the first place, he or she may do it only to please you, which defeats the whole purpose.

Depending on the age and interests of your child, you can set reasonable limits on extra-curricular activities and help make them more enjoyable for both you and your child. Here are some simple suggestions:

- **Keep a calendar to stay organized.** Display it on the refrigerator or other prominent spot in the home so that the whole family can stay up-to-date. And if you find an empty space on the calendar, leave it alone!
- **Even if your child is signed up for the season, let him or her miss one or two sessions.** Sometimes taking the opportunity to hang out on a beautiful day is more important than going to one more activity, even if you've already paid for it.
- **Try to balance activities for all of your children - and yourself.** It hardly seems fair to expend time and energy carting one kid to activities, leaving little time for the other. And don't forget to take time for yourself, to do the things you enjoy, and to spend time together as a family.

- **Create family time.** If it seems like you're eating pizza on the run every night, make a plan so that everyone can be home for dinner at the same time - even if it means eating a little later. Make sure to schedule family fun time too, whether it's playing a board game together or going on bike ride or hike.

- **Know when to draw the line and say no.** If your child is already doing a lot and *really* wants to participate in another activity, talk about what other activity or activities need to be dropped to make the desired one happen.

- **Don't underestimate the importance of downtime.** Everyone needs a chance to relax, reflect on the day, or just do nothing.

### Slowing It Down

Take a moment and think about your child's life. If you think your child is overscheduled, sit down together and decide where you can cut back. If it's very structured, with school, after-school activities, and homework being the weekday norm, consider helping your child create time to blow off some steam.

#### Resource:

<http://www.revolutionhealth.com/healthy-living/parenting/parenting-tips/children-stress/busy-child>