SCHOOL REFUSAL FACTSHEET

**What is school refusal?**

Going to school should be an enjoyable experience for any child, but some children are fearful of going to school. It can happen when the child starts school for the first time or at any grade. Often the problem may start after a brief period of illness or a short holiday.

**How does it show?**

Children can complain of stomach ache, headache or fever repeatedly, can cry and throw tantrums when asked to get ready to school. Some children find it difficult to wake up or get ready for school. Some children complain of fear of leaving the house, worry about the safety of parents or their own safety on leaving the house. These children may also feel guilty about not going to school.

**Why does it occur?**

1. Some children by nature are anxious
2. Child can have panic attacks
3. Bullying at school
4. Difficulties in studies
5. Depression

**What to do?**

Fearful children are very inconsistent in going to school.

Explaining the problem to the child enlisting his/her cooperation

Help his learn relaxation/distraction to overcome anxiety

Brief exposure i.e., brief school hours (1 or 2 classes) to begin with then gradually extending the hours so that fear gets habituated and the child gains confidence may be tried.

School refusal for more than a week signifies that the child needs to be evaluated by a child mental health professional. Early intervention ensures early return to school.