

A Healthy Start to School



Starting kindergarten is an exciting time. This booklet has information for parents/caregivers/guardians to help your child have a healthy start to school.

Has your child:

- Had an eye examination?
- Received the vaccines needed to attend school?

How to help your child do well at school

Children learn best when:

- **They have a routine at home.** When children know what activity comes next they feel safer and less worried
- **They have enough sleep, healthy foods and physical activity**
- **They feel safe in their school**
- **Their parents/caregivers/guardians are involved in their learning and their school**

Most parents and caregivers have questions about parenting and what to expect when their children start school.

There are many people in the school who can help. Speak with the teachers, principals, guidance counsellors, social workers and public health nurses.

For newcomers to Canada, there are settlement workers in certain schools to provide additional help.



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How to help your child to have a healthy start to school

Parenting services



Being a parent is one of the most rewarding jobs you will ever do but it can also be tough at times. EarlyON Child and Family Centres offer parenting support to all families with children from birth to 6 years old. EarlyON Centres are located in schools and the community.

Free parenting services and resources are available including drop-in programs and child health workshops. Visiting an EarlyON Child and Family Centre is a great way to meet other parents, get information and play with your child. Sharing your concerns and experiences with other parents lets you know you are not alone.

Healthy food, healthy learner

Children need nutritious food to give them energy so they can learn better in school.

- Give your child enough time to eat a healthy breakfast every morning
- Ask if your child's school has a breakfast, snack or lunch program



- Use Canada's Food Guide to plan lunches and snacks that include a variety of vegetables and fruits, whole grain foods and protein foods
- Encourage your child to drink water throughout the day and avoid sugary drinks
- Involve your children in planning and preparing lunches and snacks

Clean hands

Our hands often carry and spread germs.

Washing our hands is the best way to prevent many illnesses and diseases such as cold and flu.

Be a good role model and make sure that everyone washes their hands for at least 15 seconds with soap and water:

- After using the washroom
- After sneezing, coughing, or blowing the nose
- Before eating foods
- Before touching a cut or open sore
- After touching garbage
- When the hands are visibly dirty
- After playing with animals



Speech and language

Speech and language skills are very important for your child's success in school. Your child's hearing impacts their speech and language development. It is important that your child's hearing is checked regularly by an audiologist as they grow. For questions on hearing health, contact your paediatrician or primary care provider.

By age four, a child should be able to:



- Follow directions that involve three or more steps
- Tell short stories that have a beginning, middle and an end
- Match some letters with their sounds
- Be understood by strangers most of the time and use adult-like grammar

Inform your school if you have any concerns about your child's speech or language.

One of the most important things you can do to help your child get ready for school is to read together every day. Point out letters and words on the page and talk about the pictures. You can also participate in story time programs together at the library.

I see, I learn

The ability to see clearly is very important to your child's learning and success in school. It allows your child to participate fully in



school work. It is important to have an eye exam before starting school.

Junior Kindergarten students can get an OHIP covered eye exam and a free pair of eye glasses through the Eye See Eye Learn program. OHIP covers an eye exam by an optometrist every year for children age 19 and under.

Healthy teeth

Healthy teeth are important for learning, making friends, and a healthy body.



- Give your child foods that help with dental health such as milk, cheese, and fresh fruits and vegetables
- Help your child floss and brush their teeth before bedtime
- Call Toronto Public Health to get more information around healthy teeth and dental programs and services

Immunization

Vaccines protect children from serious diseases. Ontario's Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA) requires all school-age children to be vaccinated against nine designated diseases or provide a valid exemption. All the vaccines needed for school are free.

Report your child's vaccinations to Toronto Public Health at www.toronto.ca/studentvaccines. There is also a free CANImmunize app that allows you to securely store your family's vaccination records in one place. Download the app through Google Play or the Apple App Store.

Vaccine	Age at Vaccination													
	Diphtheria/Tetanus	Pertussis	Polio	Haemophilus B (Hib)	Pneumococcal-C-13	Rotavirus	Mumps	Measles	Rubella	Varicella (Chickenpox)	Meningococcal-C	Hepatitis B	Human papillomavirus (HPV)	Influenza
2 months	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
4 months	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
6 months	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
1 year					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
15 months										✓				
18 months	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									
4-6 years	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓					
Grade 7											✓	✓	✓	
14-16 years	✓	✓	✓											
Every autumn														✓

Boxes filled with the same colour are given as one needle.
Rotavirus vaccine is given by mouth; 2 or 3 doses.

Sleep and kids

Children need sleep to be healthy and happy and do their best. Children ages 5 to 13 years require 9 to 11 hours of sleep each night.

- Create a bedtime routine with your child e.g. have a bath or read a book together
- Keep your child's bedtime about the same time every night and on weekends
- Keep TVs, video games, tablets, and computers out of your child's bedroom. The light and sounds from screens prevent children from sleeping. Limit screen time before bed
- Make sure the sleep area is cool, dark and quiet
- Encourage your child to be physically active during the day
- Avoid giving your child drinks with caffeine (e.g. colas, chocolate, tea, coffee)

Be active

It is important for children to be active for at least 60 minutes every day. Running, jumping, throwing, catching and kicking help children learn motor skills and become physically stronger.

Regular physical activity strengthens bones, builds muscle, works the heart and contributes to a healthy body weight and lifestyle. Physical activity also helps children to express themselves, to learn social skills, deal with stress, and do better in school. Research shows that physical activity is important for healthy brain development.

Reduce the "non-active" time children spend on computers, electronic games, or watching TV to less than 2 hours a day. Encourage everyone in the family to be active.

Dressing for the weather

The hot summer sun can be dangerous for children. To reduce the risk of getting skin cancer and to prevent sunstroke or heat

exhaustion in the summer:

- Limit time spent in the sun between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.
- Look for shade when outdoors
- Wear a hat with a wide brim or baseball cap with flaps to shade the face and neck
- Wear loose fitting, tightly woven clothing to cover exposed skin
- If possible, wear UVA and UVB protective sunglasses
- Before sun exposure, apply lots of broad-spectrum sunscreen, SPF 30 or higher. Reapply every 2 hours or after swimming or sweating

The cold winter weather and the snow and ice can be unsafe for children. Follow these tips to keep your child warm and healthy during colder weather:

- Dress your child in layers
- Wear a hat and keep ears covered at all times
- Wear mittens instead of gloves as they are warmer
- Wear warm, waterproof boots with deep treads
- Use a neck warmer instead of a scarf

- Check regularly if your child is warm and dry

Safety on the playground

Injuries on the playground happen most frequently to children 5 to 9 years of age. Here are some things you can do to help your child have fun without getting hurt.

- Supervise your child while still giving them the chance to explore
- Make sure your child uses the playground equipment properly
- Teach your child to only jump off equipment or slides when the way is clear and to land on both feet with knees slightly bent
- Check that the equipment has strong handrails and barriers to help prevent falls and that the equipment is firmly anchored in the ground
- Check for any sharp objects that may cause an injury i.e. sharp edges or broken glass



- Report any equipment that needs repair
- Remove your child's clothing that may become tangled in playground equipment, such as drawstrings, cords, purses or necklaces
- Tie up shoelaces and use a neck warmer instead of a scarf

Right helmet for each sport

The human skull is just one centimetre thick and wearing a correct, properly fitted helmet helps protect your brain by absorbing the force from a crash or a fall. Helmets reduce the risk of serious injury. Different sports need different helmets (e.g. biking, skateboarding, in-line skating). For in-line skates, skateboards and scooters, children should use additional protective gear such as wrist guards, elbow and knee pads.

Use the 2-V-1 Rule to properly fit your helmet:



"2"

- Put the helmet level on the head, not tilting backward or forward
- Helmet should cover the top of the head and sit 2 finger-widths above your eyebrows
- Adjust the fit of the helmet by adding or repositioning the foam pads
- Move the dial or other fitting devices so it fits snug

"V"

- The side straps should meet to form a V below each ear
- If the helmet tilts back, tighten the front straps. If the helmet tilts forward, tighten the back straps

"1"

- Only 1 finger should fit between the chin and the fastened straps

Booster seats

Motor vehicle collisions are a leading cause of injury-related deaths for children in Canada.



Using a booster seat helps to protect children from serious injury 3½ times better than seat belts alone. A booster seat is mandatory for children if:

- They are under 8 years of age, or
- They are between 18 kg – 36 kg (between 40 – 80 lbs.), or
- They stand less than 145 cm (4'9") tall

Here are a few things you should know when using a booster seat:

- A booster seat is needed to position the seat belt properly over your child's body
- The lap belt should be positioned low and tight across the hips
- The shoulder belt should lay flat and snug across your child's shoulder, staying clear of the neck and face
- For children 12 years old and under, the safest place to travel is in the back seat

Kids and traffic

Children who walk to and from school are more ready to learn, feel happier, and have lower levels of stress

Teach your child about pedestrian safety with these tips:

- Children 10 years and under need to be with an adult or an older child to cross the street
- Be a good role model by walking with your child and teaching them pedestrian safety
- If possible, wear bright colours and items that are reflective in low light conditions
- Avoid crossing mid-block and between parked vehicles. Use crosswalks and intersections
- Stop before crossing any roads
- Press the "Walk" button (if there is one) and wait for your turn to cross. Obey traffic signals
- Stay alert. Unplug earphones and put away phones. Check in all directions for vehicles. If possible, make eye contact with drivers and cyclists

- Cross at the intersection when the way is clear or all vehicles have come to a full stop. Walk, don't run, across the road. Pay attention to traffic as you cross

Dangers of second-hand smoke

There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke. It is hazardous for everyone, especially children because their lungs are small and growing. Second-hand smoke can lead to asthma, allergies, ear infections and cancer.



The law in Ontario bans smoking and vaping in cars or other motor vehicles if anyone inside is age 15 years or younger.

Smoking and vaping are not permitted on school grounds (including playgrounds and sports fields), community recreational facilities, children's playgrounds, publicly owned sports areas and public areas within 20 metres of these places.

It is also important to make your home smoke-free. Here are some tips to help make your home smoke-free:

- If you or visitors to your home smoke commercial tobacco products like cigarettes or shisha or vape any substance, do so outdoors
- Let everyone coming into your home know that you do not want smoking or vaping in your home or around your child(ren)

Being an askable parent

Children are curious about bodies. Answering their questions throughout their lives will allow you to keep the lines of communication open as well as share your cultural and family values. Parents are encouraged to think about replacing "the big talk" about the changes of puberty with ongoing and open age-appropriate conversations.

- Whenever your child asks a question, it requires an answer, even if it is not right away

- It is fine to tell your child you do not know the answer. Tell your child you will find the answer or look it up together



- Children's books are a great way to help explain things that you may not know how to answer on your own
- Teach your child the correct names of all body parts
- Talk to your child about touch and encourage them to tell you if someone's touch or behaviour makes them feel uncomfortable

Children and stress

Just like adults, children can feel anxious or stressed about new situations, meeting new people or worry about too many things.

Stress in your child may show up in many ways including:

- Headaches or tummy aches
- Trouble sleeping
- Eating more or eating less
- Not wanting to go to school
- Being more quiet than usual
- Looking sad or worried

You can help your child if they feel stressed by:

- Getting your child familiar with the school and school grounds before starting school
- Spending time and doing things together
- Paying full attention when your child talks
- Showing your child that you love them
- Giving your child time to relax from a busy schedule
- Watching your child play and helping them to get along with other children

Head lice

Head lice are tiny insects that can live and breed on your child's head. They are greyish-brown in colour and their eggs are white. The oval-shaped eggs (nits) stick firmly to hair near the scalp, unlike dandruff which can be blown off.

Having head lice is very common. To help prevent your child from getting head lice you can:

- Discourage head-to-head contact and sharing of hats, scarves, hairbrushes and combs
- Tie long hair back in braids

You cannot prevent head lice by using head lice shampoos or products. Use them only if your child has head lice. Be sure to read the directions carefully; using the treatments incorrectly or too often can be harmful.

Get involved in your child's school

- Walk your child to school and get to know other parents and children
- Talk to your child's teacher about your child's strengths and what they need help with
- Volunteer to do small activities (e.g. reading with students or attending school council meetings) or larger activities at your school (e.g. helping with school trips or fundraising)
- Take time to listen to your child about what they did at school, ask questions, and encourage them (e.g. "I'm proud of how hard you tried")
- Read to or with your child at home



Toronto Public Health provides free confidential services to eligible families

- Breastfeeding support
- Developmental and nutrition screening
- Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC)
 - Home visiting
- Parenting education
- Postpartum adjustment support
- Prenatal and postnatal education
- Dental care
- Immunization
- Nutrition education
- Physical activity promotion
- Smoking cessation support
- Preschool speech and language

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