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Get Set for
Kindergarten



**Getting ready for kindergarten
is an exciting time for you and
your child.**

**This resource can help you get
your child ready to learn and
off to a healthy start at school.
It includes information about
healthy habits that will support
learning along the way.**



How do I know my child is ready to start school?

Every child has different skills, knowledge and past experiences that can affect their readiness for school. Most children ready for school can:

- read their name
- speak in full sentences that others can understand most of the time
- cooperate and play with others
- use scissors and colour
- hold a pencil and print
- get dressed with some help
- use the bathroom and wash their hands

How can I prepare my child for kindergarten?

You are your child's first teacher. There are many things you can do through daily interactions to help your child get ready for school. Talking to your child about how they feel about starting school and what to expect can help to prepare them for kindergarten. Some suggested activities include:

- Help them to read their name.
- Share your own memories of starting school.
- Read books about starting kindergarten and take your child to the library.
- Give your child opportunities to socialize and play with other children.
- Visit the school with your child and find out the name of your child's teacher.
- Have your child practice opening snack, lunch containers and their refillable water bottle.
- Be positive and enthusiastic about school.
- Talk about school routines, including what will stay the same and what will change.





How can I help my child eat healthier?

A healthy breakfast is the best way to start your child's school day. Providing healthy food as described in Canada's Food Guide will give your child the nutrients and energy needed to learn, grow and play.

Use Canada's Food Guide Eat Well Plate to plan all meals and snacks. Keep in mind that meals and snacks don't have to look exactly like the Eat Well Plate to be considered healthy.



Image: Canada's Food Guide Eat Well Plate (Health Canada, 2019)

- Fill half a plate with vegetables and fruits. They should always make up the largest portion of a meal.
- Include protein foods, especially those that come from plants more often, like beans, legumes or tofu.

Snack Safely:

- Keep cold food cold - use freezer gel packs and insulated lunch boxes or bags.
- Keep hot food hot - add hot foods to pre-heated and insulated containers.
- Wash all vegetables and fruit thoroughly with clean water prior to eating.

- Include whole grain foods such as brown rice, whole grain pasta or bread.

Here are some other healthy eating tips to keep in mind:

- It is common for young children to get hungry between meals. Crunchy, colourful vegetables and fruits are an easy way to make sure they get enough.
- Young children love helping in the kitchen. To ensure your child eats the foods you provide, ask them to select from healthy choices they enjoy by packing their own snacks and lunch.
- Make water the drink of choice. Pack a reusable water bottle that your child can refill at school. Other healthy drink options include white, unsweetened lower fat milk or fortified plant beverages such as soy or almond.



Why is physical activity important for your child entering school?

Physical activity helps children:

- learn new things
- feel good about themselves
- have fun playing with friends
- improve their health
- reduce stress and anxiety

What are movement skills and why are they important for starting school?

- As a parent, you are your child's first teacher.
- Learning basic movement skills helps preschool children feel more comfortable being physically active at school and throughout life.
- For example, the basic skill of jumping is needed for playing hopscotch, skipping rope, and later, for playing basketball and other sports. The ability to throw a ball is a building block to play most ball sports.

1. Practice over the summer

- Running shoes – have your little one practice putting on their running shoes so they are ready to walk, run, and play.

- If your child is going to be walking to school, try practicing the route a few times to get your child used to the walk.
- Set up your family safety rules and show your child how to stay safe when playing in the neighbourhood or park.
- It is important to let your child play. Not only does it give them health benefits it provides them with an opportunity to learn. Some active games you can try over the summer include hide and seek, tag, and red light/green light.

2. Tips from the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines

- Most Canadian children are not meeting the daily guidelines.
- For health benefits, children ages 3-4 should accumulate at least 180 minutes (3 hours) of physical activity at any intensity spread throughout the day.

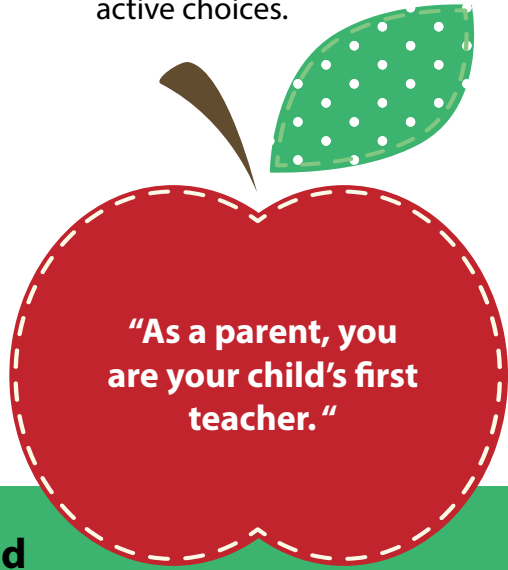
3. Spend Less Time Sitting

- As parents, it is important to limit children's time spent sitting (e.g. watching television or playing video/computer games) to 2 hours a day.
- Replace screen time with active play time.

4. Role model

- Be a role model by being active each day. More active parents have more active kids.

- As a parent, you can influence your child's level of activity. This can help them to make lifelong active choices.



How do I protect my child from the sun's harmful rays?



Children will likely spend some time outdoors during the school day (for example, recess, fieldtrips, etc.). A child's skin is very sensitive and can sunburn easily. Sun exposure and sunburns in childhood may increase the risk of skin cancer later in life. Following these sun safety tips will protect your child from the harmful effects of the sun:

- Send sunglasses with 100% UVA and UVB protection.
- Unbreakable lenses are a good choice for children.
- Send a hat that covers the face, ears and back of the neck.
- Dress your child in loose fitting clothing (made with tightly woven fabrics) to cover as much skin as possible.
- Use a sunscreen and lip balm with SPF 30 or higher.
- Teach your child to find shade whenever possible.

How can I protect my child from getting sick?

Children's hands pick up germs from many different sources (for example, desks, doorknobs, toys, etc.) during the school day. These germs can enter their bodies when they touch their face. Handwashing is one of the most important things to do to avoid passing on germs.

To avoid getting sick or passing infections to others, talk to your child about handwashing:

- before and after eating
- after using the washroom
- after playing outdoors
- after coughing, sneezing or blowing his/her nose

Sick generally means that your child is not feeling well enough to join in normal activities. Children should not attend school if they are sick.

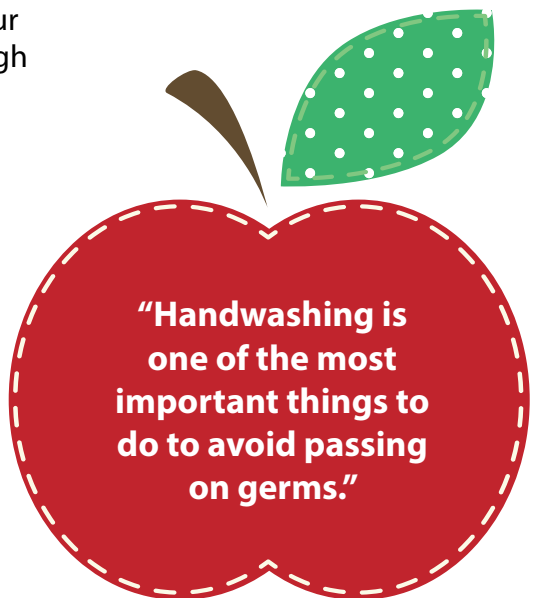
If your child is going to be absent, notify the school.

Keep me at home if:

- I have a fever higher than 38°C.
- I'm throwing up or have diarrhea.

- My eyes are pink and crusty.
- I have a cough that keeps me awake.
- I have a sore throat.
- I have an infection/disease that can be spread to my teachers and friends.
- I am generally feeling unwell. If unsure keep me home to give me time to feel better!

Your child can return to school/child care when their symptoms have been improving for at least 24 hours (48 hours if symptoms are gastrointestinal).





Call a doctor if:

- I've had a fever higher than 38°C for longer than 2 days.
- I've been throwing up or had diarrhea for longer than 2 days.
- I've had a runny nose for more than a week and it is not getting better.
- I still have asthma symptoms after using my regular asthma medication.

To talk to a public health nurse, call Durham Health Connection Line at 1-800-841-2729 or 905-668-2020.

Why do I need to provide immunization information to the school?

Immunization protects children from many serious diseases. You will need to submit your child's immunization record when registering your child for school. This is required by the Health Department under the Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA). Submit the record online at www.durham.ca/immunize.

If you do not provide an up-to-date immunization record for your child, you will receive a letter from the Health Department. The letter will explain what immunizations are missing from your child's record. Nurses from the Health Department will work with you and /or your health care provider to ensure that the missing immunization information is obtained as soon as possible. If your child cannot be immunized for medical or philosophical reasons, please contact the Health Department to find out more about the exemption process.



When should I move my child into a booster seat?

Give them time to grow!

It's safest to keep your child in each stage of car seat for as long as possible. Children should use their car seat until they outgrow the height or weight limits that are listed on the seat.

If your child is still rear facing, most seats have a weight limit of 40-45 lbs. Many forward-facing car seats have a maximum weight of 65lbs. Each seat is different so be sure to check the height and weight limits of your child's seat.

Boosters seats

Booster seats are used when children have outgrown their forward-facing car seat.

Before moving your child to a booster seat make sure they meet the minimum weight required by the manufacturer of the seat you've chosen.

Remember!

- Car seats expire! Refer to the owner's manual or check the labels on the seat.
- Never install a car seat or booster seat in front of an active air bag.
- The back seat is the safest place for any child under the age of 13.



How will I know if my child has a hearing problem?

If children have a hearing problem, it can affect their speech and language development. This may limit success at school.

Possible signs of a hearing problem include when a child:

- does not respond when called or speaks loudly
- has trouble understanding conversation
- frequently asks for things to be repeated
- turns up the volume on the TV or radio
- has frequent colds and ear infections



"Hearing can be tested at any age. If you have concerns, ask your doctor about having your child's hearing tested."

Vision Screening Did You Know?

Your child's vision is very important to learning and school success. OHIP will cover a comprehensive eye examination by an optometrist every year for children under 19 years old.



Regular dental visits are important to maintain good oral and overall health. Healthy Smiles Ontario is a government-funded dental program that provides **FREE preventive, routine, and emergency dental services for eligible children and youth 17 years old and under.**

The importance of good oral health for children

Good oral health is important for children as they grow. Healthy baby teeth are not only important for a child's self-esteem and sense of well-being, they are also necessary for helping develop good speech, healthy eating habits and social skills. Cavities and gum disease can be painful and can lead to serious infections, which may affect the growth of adult teeth. Pain can result in loss of sleep, difficulty eating and can impact a child's ability to learn and attend school.


Taking care of your child's teeth:

- Brush your child's teeth for two minutes twice a day (morning and bedtime) to remove plaque.
- Bedtime is the most important time to brush to help prevent cavities.
- You may begin using a small amount (the size of a grain of rice) of fluoridated toothpaste only if your child can spit out.
- DO NOT let your child swallow or eat the toothpaste.
- Continue to brush and floss your child's teeth until they are about 8 or 9 years of age.
- Floss your child's teeth at least once a day to clean between the teeth and under the gums.
- Limit sugary snacks and drinks. If your child needs a drink between meals water is best.
- Avoid sending your child to school with sugary and sticky foods.
- Send a refillable water bottle to school with your child. Water is sugar free and a great way to quench your thirst.

How much sleep is enough?

Getting a good night's sleep is important so that your child will have the energy to play and learn during the school day.

The amount of sleep needed at this age ranges from 10 to 13 hours. Bedtime routines are especially important. A positive and consistent bedtime routine helps your child to wind down and relax.



"The amount of sleep needed at this age ranges from 10 to 13 hours."

How can I limit my child's exposure to second-hand and third-hand smoke?

Most people know second-hand smoke is harmful to our children, but fewer are aware of third-hand smoke and its risks. The toxins from third-hand smoke cling to the smoker's hair, clothing, curtains, carpeting, furniture, toys, and other surfaces.

Children are at higher risk of exposure because they are playing near these surfaces and breathe in these toxins. In children, exposure to second-hand smoke has been linked to respiratory illness, childhood cancer, middle ear disease, onset of asthma and worsening of asthma. Research also shows that third-hand smoke increases the risk of children becoming overactive, and may lead to heart disease and asthma. This could result in missed school days because of illness.

If you smoke, consider quitting. If you are not ready to quit, smoke outside and ask your visitors to do the same. Wash your hands and face and change your clothing before you play with your children. Protect your children from second-hand and third-hand smoke by keeping your home and car smoke-free.

You can help your child adjust to starting school

Starting school brings a lot of change for you, your child and your family. One of the things that affects how quickly your child adjusts to kindergarten is his/her resiliency. Resiliency is the ability to bounce back from challenges and move forward with new knowledge and skills. There are many things that you can do to support resiliency in your child. You can:

Create Connections

- Bonding with your child is the best way to build his/her resiliency (for example, every day, try eating some meals together and reading together).
- Spend time with your child talking about starting school.
- Involve your child in getting ready for kindergarten (for example, count down calendar to their first day of school, play 'school' with your child, focussing on letters and numbers).
- Let your child know that you (or your child's caregiver) will be at the school or bus stop at the end of the day to pick him/her up.

- Try to get involved at your child's school.
- Be a positive role model! It is important to take care of yourself by practicing healthy habits and ways of coping.

Provide a Safe and Caring Home

- A safe and caring home helps a child succeed.
- Work with your child to create routines leading up to and during the school year. Routines create stability and help a child foresee what is coming next in the day (for example, bedtime routines, packing lunch/snacks together).



Teach and Learn

- These skills support resiliency.
- Self Care – Help your child get ready to learn by helping him/her to:
 - eat healthy food
 - get plenty of sleep
 - set aside time for active play
- This will help reduce stress and give them strength to manage their school day.
- Emotional Skills – Let your child know that it is normal to have feelings and important to express those feelings in a positive way. Ask your child about their day at school or how they're feeling about starting school. Talk about the exciting parts of starting school (for example, making new friends).
- Problem Solving Skills – Try to predict challenges your child may face as they

start school (for example, opening and closing lunch containers). Brainstorm and practice solutions with your child so they will be able to tackle challenges and develop problem solving skills. Give them a chance to solve the problem. Encourage your child to ask for help when needed. Praise steps in the right direction.

Starting school is a big change for your child, but a good start at home will help him/her to succeed at school and beyond.

Together... parents and educators can support the development of happy, healthy children now and for the future.



Health Information and Resources

Visit our website
for ways you can
help your child get
ready for school, and
learn about community
programs for school
readiness.



durham.ca/childdevelopment



The Health Department has a free, confidential help line to provide information to help you protect your health and prevent injuries and disease.

Talk to a public health nurse, health inspector, dentist or dental hygienist



HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

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Durham Health Connection Line
905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729

durham.ca/health

Dial 311 (within regional limits)

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729

