



1, 2, 3 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
- get dressed with some help
- use the bathroom and wash their hands



How can I prepare my child for kindergarten?

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:

- helping them read their name
- sharing some of your own memories of starting school
- reading books about starting kindergarten
- visiting the school with your child and finding out the name of your child's teacher before the first day
- having your child practice opening snack and lunch containers and their refillable water bottle
- being positive and enthusiastic about school

Talking about school routines, including what will stay the same and what will change may also be helpful.



Get a healthy start to the day!

A healthy breakfast is the best way to start your child's school day. Healthy foods from the four food groups described in Canada's Food Guide will give your child the nutrients and energy needed to learn, grow and play. The four food groups include: Vegetables and Fruit, Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives, and Meat and Alternatives.

It is common for young children to get hungry between meals, so snacking on crunchy and colourful vegetables and fruit throughout the day is an easy way to meet their daily requirements. Young children love helping in the kitchen. To ensure your child eats the foods you provide, ask your little helper to select from the healthy choices they enjoy at home and to help pack their snacks and lunch.

Remember to:

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





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 12 hours. Bedtime routines are especially important. A positive and consistent bedtime routine helps your child to wind down and relax.



How much physical activity does my child need?

Children love to move, and they are usually good at being active. Physical activity helps develop both bodies and minds.

All children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day. They will have a chance to play and run during school recess.

Another great way for children to build activity into the day is by walking to and from school. This is also an excellent opportunity to spend time with your child and hear about their day.

Some physical activities require a helmet. A properly fitting helmet protects your child's head when biking, skating or rollerblading.



2
Two fingers above your eyebrow to the bottom of your helmet.



4
Four fingers to make a V-shape around the bottom of your ears.



1
One finger under the strap beneath your chin.



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

Children will likely spend some time outdoors during the school day (e.g., recess, fieldtrips, etc.). Children's skin is very sensitive and can sunburn easily. Sun exposure and sunburns as a child may increase the risk of skin cancer later in life. Following these guidelines will protect your child from too much sun exposure:

- Send sunglasses with UVA and UVB protection.
- Unbreakable lenses are a good choice for children.
- Send a wide brimmed hat for extra protection on the back of the neck.
- Dress your child in cool, loose fitting clothing (made with tightly woven fabrics) to cover as much skin as possible.
- Use a sunscreen and lip balm with at least SPF 30.
- Teach your child the "shade rule": when your shadow is shorter than you are, find shade!



How long does my child need to use a booster seat?

For all the exciting trips ahead (e.g. driving to and from school, fieldtrips, etc.), a booster seat is required. It is important to use a booster seat until your child is at least 145 cm (4' 9") to raise your child up so the seatbelt fits correctly.

Read the instructions for your child's booster seat for height and weight requirements.

Remember, the safest place for your child to travel is in the back seat.



How can I protect my child from getting sick?

Children's hands pick up germs from many different sources (e.g., 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. Symptoms may include fever, vomiting, diarrhea, cough, or a rash with a fever, etc. See your family doctor if you are concerned about your child being sick. Children should not attend school if they are sick.

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

Immunization protects children from many serious diseases. A copy of your child's immunization record is needed when your child is registering for school to provide proof of your child's immunization status. This is required by the Health Department under the Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA).

If you do not provide a complete immunization record for your child, you will receive a letter from the Health Department. You will be asked to provide proof of complete immunization including the vaccine(s) and the date given.

It is recommended that children between the ages of 4-6 years receive a booster DPTP vaccine to protect against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus and polio.



How will I know if my child has any vision problems?

It is recommended to have your child's vision checked before school entry. If your child has a vision problem, it may affect their learning. Children often do not realize that they have a vision problem. They think that what they are seeing is "normal". Vision problems are very common and affect 1 in 6 children. OHIP will cover the cost of annual eye examinations for children up to age 19.



How can I help my child have healthy teeth?

Healthy teeth and gums are important as your child grows to help them develop good speech, healthy eating habits, and good social skills – all skills they will be using in school. Here are some points to keep in mind:

- Children lack the ability to brush their teeth well until they can write.
- Help brush your child's teeth at least twice a day especially before bed.
- Limiting sugary snacks and drinks between meals will help your child to be cavity free.

It is important that your child see a dentist on a regular basis to keep their teeth healthy. It is hard for children to do well in school if they have a tooth ache.



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.



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

In children, exposure to second-hand smoke has been linked to respiratory illness, childhood cancer, onset of asthma, and worsening of asthma and middle ear disease. This could result in missed school days because of illness. There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke. Keeping your home and car smoke-free will limit the amount of second-hand smoke your child will breathe in. If you smoke, smoke outside. Ask your visitors to do the same.



How can I help my child adjust to kindergarten?

Starting school brings a lot of change for your child and your family. How quickly your child adjusts to kindergarten depends on many things, such as your child's personality and stage of development. Past experiences in the care of others (e.g., babysitter, day care, etc.) may also have an effect on how your child will adjust.

Children may feel stressed during this adjustment period. A child who is feeling stress may complain of headaches, tummy aches, or just not feeling well. Some children may act differently than they usually do, for example:

- having trouble sleeping
- not wanting to go to school
- looking sad or upset
- being more quiet than usual
- expressing frustration in ways that are not acceptable (e.g., hitting, throwing, talking back)
- eating less or more than usual

You can help children adjust by:

- encouraging them to talk about their feelings
- trying to understand how they are feeling
- encouraging physical activity which may help relieve stress (e.g., go for a bike ride, walk, play ball, etc.)
- giving them time to relax, and ensuring they get enough sleep
- praising and encouraging good behaviour
- showing that you love them

Sending your child to school with a positive attitude helps encourage enthusiasm for school and eagerness to learn. Reassure your child that you (or your child's caregiver) will be at the school or bus stop at the end of the day to pick them up.

If your child continues to have difficulties with behaviour and/or complaints about physical problems like headaches or tummy aches, consult your doctor or health care provider.



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.

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

Talk to a public health nurse
Durham Health Connection Line
1-800-841-2729
 or
905-666-6241
 MONDAY TO FRIDAY 9:00 am to 6:00 pm



durham.ca

Talk to a public health inspector
Environmental Help Line
1-888-777-9613 ext. 2188
 or
905-723-3818 ext. 2188
 MONDAY TO FRIDAY 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

Talk to a dentist or dental hygienist
Oral Health
1-866-853-1326
 or
905-723-1365
 MONDAY TO FRIDAY 8:30 am to 4:30 pm