

Let's go to Kindergarten!

Information and tips to help prepare
your child for kindergarten



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hpePublicHealth.ca

2023-03-28


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Getting started at school

Starting kindergarten is an exciting time in your child's life. It is a place where children play, grow, and learn — socially, emotionally, and academically. It is normal for children and parents to have a mix of emotions about starting school.



How can I help my child prepare for kindergarten?

Read the information and tips in this book.

Give your child opportunities to interact with other children in small and large groups.

Set healthy routines of being active, eating well, and getting enough sleep to help make this transition easier.

Keep a positive attitude about starting school. Children who are excited about learning generally do well in kindergarten.

For more tips visit:

Full-Day Kindergarten
Preparing Your Child,
Government of Ontario
www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/multi/english/fdk_fs_preparing_your_child_en.pdf

EarlyON

EarlyON child and family centres offer free drop-in programs for caregivers and children from birth to six years of age. If you want to meet people, get advice, learn or play with your child, find the centre closest to you: ontario.ca/page/find-earlyon-child-and-family-centre

Engaging in your child's education

Being engaged in your child's education is essential to student achievement, development and well-being.

Engage in your child's education by:

Meeting and communicating with your child's teacher.

Talking to your child about their day at school.

Providing a positive learning environment at home.

Helping your child develop positive attitudes towards learning.

Reading to, or with, your child everyday.

Encouraging your child to draw, scribble, copy shapes, and print.



For more information on how to engage with your child's education visit:

ontariodirectors.ca/parent_engagement.html

Helping children deal with stress

Starting kindergarten can be a stressful time for some children and parents.

Help your child deal with stress and challenges:



Connect with your child

- Build a strong, loving relationship
- Talk about feelings
- Set routines and start new school routines early

Listen to your child

- Give your full attention
- Listen without speaking
- Take their worries or fears seriously

Respond to your child

- Notice when they seem upset
- Comfort your child
- Find ways to reduce the feelings of stress

If you have questions or concerns about your child's mental well-being contact:

Children's Mental Health Services

1-844-462-2647

cmhsonline.ca

Watch this video to help your child deal with stress:

youtu.be/i71S_M2wOQ4

Learn more about student mental health:

smho-smso.ca/parents-and-caregivers

For more information:

hpePublicHealth.ca/resilience

What are good sleep habits?

Children who do not sleep well may have poor behaviour, be aggressive, or have short attention spans. Creating good sleep habits can help children get the sleep they need.



Bedtime tips:

Have a quiet, soothing bedtime routine that you follow every day.

Allow time for relaxing activities like a bath, reading, or a quiet chat before bed.

Avoid TV, computer, video games, and phone use before bed.

Sleep guidelines:

Aim for uninterrupted sleep with consistent bed and wake-up times, even on weekends.

Age in years	Hours of sleep
3 to 4	10 to 13
5 to 13	9 to 11

For more information:

Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (0 to 4 years of age) and Children and Youth (5 to 17 years of age)

csepguidelines.ca

How do I get my child to move more?

Children need to move their bodies. Spending more time being active and less time watching TV, playing on the computer, and riding in cars will help your child do better in school and be healthier — physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Ways for children to be more active:

Spend more time outside, and less time sitting.

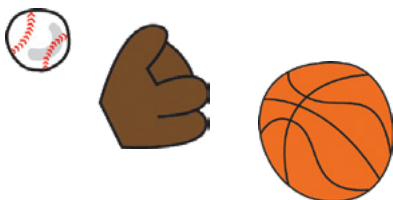
Spend less time riding in cars, and more time walking.

Limit screen time (e.g., TV, video games, computer). Less is best!



Screen time guidelines:

Remove screens from family mealtimes, bedrooms and bedtime routines.



Age in years	Hours of Screen Time
3 to 4	1 hour or less
5 to 11	4 hours or less

For activity ideas, visit:

ParticipACTION • participaction.com

Have A Ball Together • haveaballtogether.ca

Why is eating well important?



Eating well gives kids the energy they need to learn, play and grow.

Help your child get the nutrition they need by offering a variety of food each day. Offer water with and between meals and snacks to help your child stay hydrated.

Try these quick and easy ideas:

Breakfast

- Whole grain cereal with white milk and fruit
- Nut butter (or Wowbutter) and banana in a whole wheat tortilla

Lunch

- Mini veggie pizza on a whole wheat pita with a fruit cup
- Grilled cheese sandwich with veggie sticks and dip

Snacks

- Yogurt topped with drained canned fruit and half a granola bar, crumbled
- Veggie sticks or sliced fruit with cheese cubes



Offer food in textures that are safe for your child. Round, firm, stringy, and sticky foods can be a choking risk for children under four.

For more kid-friendly recipe ideas, visit:

cookspiration.com

How can I help my child have a healthy relationship with food?

Help your child develop a healthy relationship with food by taking care of feeding and letting them do the job of eating.

As a caregiver, you decide:

What food is offered	Try to include a variety of vegetables and fruits, whole grains, and protein foods at meals and snacks.
When food is offered	Offer meals and snacks two to three hours apart, with only water in between.
Where food is offered	Serve meals and snacks at a table without distractions (like screens or toys).



Let your child decide:

How much to eat	It is normal for children to eat a lot one day and a little the next. Allow your child to eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full.
Whether to eat	Your child may skip a meal or snack if they are not hungry. Encourage them to stay at the table and spend time with the family even if they do not want to eat.

Healthy kids come in many different shapes and sizes. It is okay if your child is bigger or smaller than other children. They will eat the amount that is right for their body.

Concerned about your child's eating habits?

Speak with a Registered Dietitian at Health Connect Ontario for free. Dial 811 or visit their website at

healthconnectontario.health.gov.on.ca

How can I help my child learn to eat new foods?

Children are naturally hesitant with new foods. It can take many tries for your child to like and accept a new food. They may also eat a food one day and reject it the next.

These tips can help your child learn to like new foods on their own:

Don't pressure them to eat	Bribing, reminding, or having a "one bite" rule can make them less likely to try a new food.
Offer new foods with old favourites	Serve new foods with your child's favourites. Make sure there is always at least one thing on the table they will eat, like rice or bread.
Offer foods in different ways	Offer the same food in different ways. Try shredded veggies in a wrap one day and veggie sticks with dip another day.
Let your child explore food	Smelling, touching, and licking are all ways they learn about a food. It's okay if they don't take a bite.
Set ground rules for mealtime behaviour	Remind them to be polite if they try something they don't like. Ask them not to use words like "gross" or "yuck".
Don't use food as a reward	Don't offer your child food as a reward for good behaviour or for trying other foods.
Be a role model	Eat with your child as often as possible. Let them see you enjoying a variety of foods, including the new foods you are offering them.



For more information on managing "picky" eating, visit:

unlockfood.ca



Is my child's development on track?

If you have questions, or concerns about your child's development, it is important to speak to your child's health care provider or contact the HPEPH Child Health CARELine.

The Looksee Checklist can help you determine if your child's development is on track.

The Checklist includes information and activities to do with your child to help with their development. It can be used to find areas where your child may need extra help.



The Looksee Checklist

lookseechecklist.com

Free to Ontario residents in a variety of languages.

Contact HPEPH Child Health CARELine to request a printed copy:
613-966-5500 or 1-800-267-2803, ext. 223

Looking for services regarding your child's development?

Reach out to the SmartStart Hub to help get connected to the right service. Call the Intake line at 613-969-7400, ext. 2264

How can my child get to school safely?

You can teach your child how to get to school safely whether they walk, cycle, or take the school bus. An adult or older responsible child should always accompany young children.



Walk safely:

Look left, right, and left again before crossing the street.

Walk on the sidewalk where there is one.

Follow crossing guard signals.

For more information, visit parachute.ca/en/injury-topic/pedestrian-safety/

School bus safety:

Wait in a safe place well back from the edge of the road.

Take 10 giant steps away from the front of the bus before crossing the street.

Always listen to the bus driver.

For more information, visit <https://triboard.ca/parents/>

Bike safely:

Wear a bike helmet.

Use hand signals.

Have a working bell on the bike.

For more information, visit parachute.ca/en/injury-topic/cycling/

Teaching children to walk, cycle, or take the bus helps them to:

Get more physical activity.

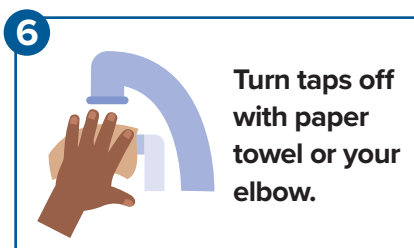
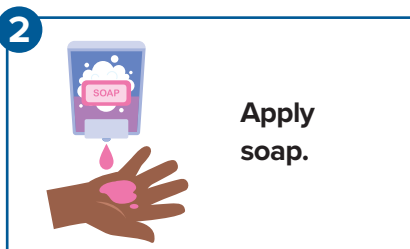
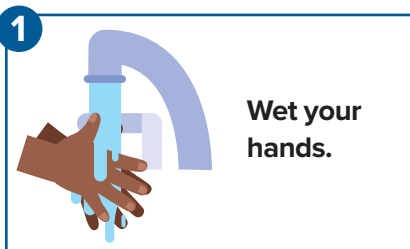
Be more alert and ready to learn.

Help keep the air clean.

Have fun getting to school.

How to wash your hands properly

Teaching your child how to wash their hands is one of the most important ways to keep them healthy.



Teach your child to wash their hands:

Before and after making food

Before and after eating food

Before and after touching a cut or open sore

After using the toilet

After handling garbage

After playing outside

After touching pets

After sneezing, blowing, or wiping their nose

How do I keep my child's teeth healthy and strong?

Parents can help children care for their teeth.
Brush, floss, and visit the dentist regularly.



Lift the lip and look often for any white or brown lines or spots along the gum line or between teeth.

These may be the start of cavities and you should see an oral health professional.

Brush teeth twice a day for at least 2 minutes.

Children need help brushing until their hand coordination is more developed.

Use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste with fluoride.

Brush in small circles along the gum line.

Floss your child's teeth every day.

Limit sugary foods and drinks.

Snacks like raisins, granola bars, fruit leather, and juice are sweet and sticky. The longer and more often sugar is on teeth, the higher the chance of developing tooth decay. Choose water to drink. Water helps to rinse sugar and acids from teeth.

Is there dental screening in school?

Each year, children in Kindergarten and Grade 2 receive dental screening by the HPEPH Oral Health team. The screening includes a quick look into the mouth with a sterilized mouth mirror. A screening card is sent home with the dental findings noted on the card.

Financial help for dental care

Healthy Smiles Ontario will cover the cost of preventive care, basic treatment and urgent care for eligible children.

Sometimes a child has an urgent dental need that must be seen by a dentist right away. Funding is available for children 17 and under, whose families can't afford to pay for this care.

The Canada Dental Benefit assists in lowering dental costs for eligible families earning less than \$90,000 per year and who's child is under 12 years old with no access to a private dental insurance plan. For more information about the Canada Dental Benefit, visit Canada.ca.



For information about financial help, or to schedule a screening appointment, contact:

HPEPH Dental Program

613-966-5500 or
1-800-267-2803 ext. 680

hpePublicHealth.ca/kidsdental/

How do I get my child's vision checked?

An eye exam with an optometrist is free of charge (once every 12 months, up to the age of 19) with a valid Ontario health card.

If you have concerns about your child's vision, don't wait. If found early, many eye conditions can be treated.



The Ontario Association of Optometrists recommends that children have a regular eye exam at 6 months of age, before kindergarten, and then every 12 to 24 months.

Eye exams (one per year) are free for children and youth, covered by OHIP.

To find an optometrist near you to book an appointment for your child:

Search the College of Optometrists of Ontario public directory: members.collegeoptom.on.ca/COO/PublicDirectory/Public_Directory_Member_Public_Register/PublicRegisterMember.aspx

How do I report my child's shots?

When you register your child for school, you must also report their immunizations to HPEPH.

All students attending school in Ontario must be up to date with immunizations or have a valid exemption.

Your child is due for immunizations between four and six years of age.

Keep your immunization record in a safe place.



Report your child's immunizations to HPEPH. Doctors do not automatically send immunization updates to Public Health.

Online

hpePublicHealth.ca/daycare-school-immunizations/

Email a copy of your child's immunization record to cdcimm@hpeph.ca

Fax a copy of your child's immunization record to 613-966-8145

Phone 613-966-5500 or 1-800-267-2803, ext. 221

Does second-hand smoke affect my child's learning?

No amount of second-hand smoke is safe.
Make your home and vehicle smoke-free!

Children exposed to second-hand smoke are at greater risk of getting sick and missing school.

Remember, in Ontario it is against the law to smoke or vape in a vehicle carrying children under the age of 16.



For help quitting or cutting back on smoking, contact:

Tobacco Talk Line

613-966-5500 or 1-800-267-2803, ext. 600

ttl@hpeph.ca

Want more information?

Visit hpePublicHealth.ca/school-age-children-youth

Contact healthyschools@hpeph.ca

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