



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.**



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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?

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

- 93% of Canadian children are not meeting the 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.

of activity. This can help them to make lifelong active choices.

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



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.

Send me to school if:

- I have a runny nose or a little cough, but no other symptoms.
- I haven't needed to take

medicine for a fever in the last 24 hours.

- I haven't thrown up or had diarrhea in the last 24 hours.

Keep me at home if:

- I have a fever higher than 37.5°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.





Call a doctor if:

- I've had a fever higher than 37.5°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 905-666-6241.

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 two booster vaccines to protect against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps, rubella and varicella.



Booster Seats... Give them time to grow!

What's the rush?

- Booster seats save lives!
- Car crashes kill more children than any other cause of injury in Canada.
- Properly used booster seats can reduce childhood injuries by 60% compared to using a seat belt alone.

How do Booster Seats work?

- Booster seats raise your child up so that the seat belt fits correctly.
- A lap and shoulder belt must always be used with a booster seat.

Best Practice!

- Keep your child in a booster seat until they properly fit an adult seat belt, usually between 8 and 12 years old.
- As long as your child still fits within the manufacturer's weight and height limits, he or she is safer in a booster seat.



The Law:

- A child can use a seat belt alone if they are:
 - 80 lbs OR
 - 4'9" tall OR
 - 8 years old

Remember:

- Never place a child in a booster seat in front of an active air bag.
- Booster seats expire! Refer to the owner's manual or replace if greater than 10 years after the date of manufacturer (located on the seat).
- 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."

School-Based Vision Screening Program Did You Know?

Your child's vision is very important to learning and school success. Durham Region Health Department Public Health Nurses conduct vision screening for senior kindergarten students.

The screening program does not replace an appointment with an optometrist. It is recommended that families follow up with an optometrist for a complete OHIP covered eye exam for their child. The Ontario Association of Optometrists recommends that children have their first eye exam at six months old, then another between the ages of two and three, followed with annual appointments. OHIP will cover a comprehensive eye examination by an optometrist every year for children under 19 years old.



“Practicing good oral health habits early will give your child the best chance to live a cavity-free life!”

How can I help my child have healthy teeth?

Healthy teeth and gums are important as your child grows. Healthy baby teeth are extremely important for eating healthy foods, speech development, keeping the space for adult teeth and smiling. Bring your child to a dental

professional by their first birthday or within six months of eruption of the first tooth. You will find out the best ways to care for your child's teeth, resolve early issues, and prevent future problems that could impact your child's school attendance, performance and social skills. Practicing good oral health habits early will give your child the best chance to live a cavity-free life!

Here are some points to keep in mind:

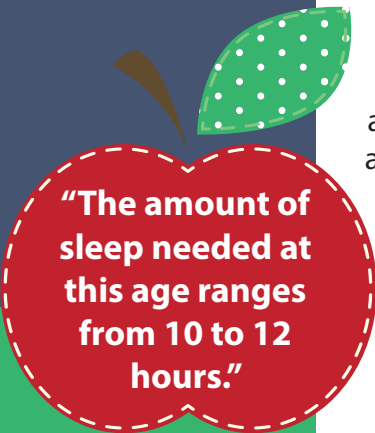
- Brush your child's teeth for two minutes twice a day.
- Bedtime is the most important time to brush to prevent cavities.
- Floss your child's teeth at least once a day to clean between the teeth and under the gums.
- You may begin using a small amount (size of a grain of rice) of fluoridated toothpaste only if your child can spit it 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.
- Limit sugary snacks and drinks. If your child needs a drink between meals, water is best.



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.



"The amount of sleep needed at this age ranges from 10 to 12 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. Encourage your child to ask for help when needed.

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 Healthy Families



[/DurhamHealthyFamilies](https://www.facebook.com/DurhamHealthyFamilies)



[@DurhamFamilies](https://twitter.com/DurhamFamilies)

You Tube

[Durham Healthy Families](https://www.youtube.com/DurhamHealthyFamilies)



[Instagram.com/Durham Healthy Families](https://www.instagram.com/DurhamHealthyFamilies)

Where Durham families go to find support, information and resources to raise a healthy family.

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

Talk to a public health nurse

Durham Health Connection Line

1-800-841-2729 or
905-666-6241

Talk to a public health inspector

Environmental Help Line

1-888-777-9613 or
905-723-3818

Talk to a dentist or dental hygienist

Oral Health

1-866-853-1326 or
905-723-1365



HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

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[durham.ca](https://www.durham.ca)

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



You Tube

