

A healthier school year starts here

Whether your kids are gearing up for in-person learning in the fall or continuing virtual education at home, now is the time to check in on their physical and emotional well-being. Just as new pencils and notebooks help kids feel prepared in the classroom, creating healthy habits now will ensure they feel their best during the next school year.



Schedule a well-child visit

It's important for kids to have an annual checkup before the school year starts. This physical exam may be required for students entering kindergarten or transitioning into middle or high school.

Use this opportunity to catch up on your child's vaccinations, as needed. Being proactive will protect them against serious diseases like chickenpox, meningitis and measles.



Keep kids physically active

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends kids ages 6 to 17 get at least 60 minutes of physical exercise each day. Mix it up with aerobic activities, like running and jumping, as well as muscle-strengthening activities such as climbing, push-ups, etc.

Remember: Kids may need a recent physical to participate in school sports or other activities.



Build healthy nutrition habits

Good nutrition is critical for growth and cognitive development during childhood and adolescence. Help your child understand how to make healthy food choices, and keep better-for-you after-school snacks on hand, like fruits and vegetables instead of chips and cookies.

Kids often imitate their parents, so consider making healthy choices at home too.



Prioritize sleep

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends between 9 and 12 hours of sleep per night for children ages 6 to 12. Teens need around 9 to 10 hours.

Insufficient sleep can lead to decreased performance in school. It can also increase your child's risk of developing serious health conditions, like diabetes, obesity and depression.

Establishing a good sleep routine now can help ensure the habit sticks when school begins.



Take time to understand your child's feelings and fears

While some kids may be excited about returning to school and seeing friends and classmates, others may feel emotionally distressed or fearful after an extended period of social isolation.

Talk with your kids about going back to school. Find out if they need help with social skills, like making friends. Watch for signs of anxiety or depression and seek help from your child's physician if you're concerned.



Know your school's COVID-19 guidelines

In the fall, each school district may have different requirements to prevent the spread of COVID-19. If your child is unvaccinated, take steps to protect them and reduce the risk of transmission:

- Wear a mask, especially while indoors
- Practice physical distancing
- Stay home when sick and get tested

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REG-635030-21/07-UT
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