

# Let's go to Kindergarten!

Information and tips to help prepare  
your child for kindergarten



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# Getting started at school

Starting kindergarten is an exciting time in your child's life. School 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](http://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](http://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:

Providing a positive learning environment at home.

Helping your child develop positive attitudes towards learning.

Meeting and communicating with your child's teacher.

Talking to your child about their day at school.

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:**

**[Ontario.ca/page/stay-involved-your-childs-education](https://ontario.ca/page/stay-involved-your-childs-education)**

# 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](http://cmhsonline.ca)

**Watch this video to help your child deal with stress:**

[youtu.be/i71S\\_M2wOQ4](https://youtu.be/i71S_M2wOQ4)

**Learn more about student mental health:**

[smho-smso.ca/parents-and-caregivers](http://smho-smso.ca/parents-and-caregivers)

# What are good sleep habits?

Children who do not sleep well may find it difficult to pay attention, manage their emotions, and follow instruction. 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](http://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.

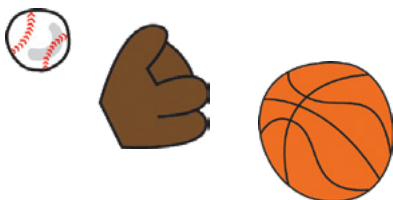
Spend less time riding in cars, and more time walking.

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](http://participaction.com)

**Have a Ball Together** • [haveaballtogether.ca](http://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
- 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](http://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:

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



## Let your child decide:

<b>How much to eat</b>	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.
<b>Whether to eat</b>	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](https://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:**

<b>Don't pressure them to eat</b>	Bribing, reminding, or having a “one bite” rule can make them less likely to try a new food.
<b>Offer new foods with old favourites</b>	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.
<b>Offer foods in different ways</b>	Offer the same food in different ways. Try shredded veggies in a wrap one day and veggie sticks with dip another day.
<b>Let your child explore food</b>	Smelling, touching, and licking are all ways they learn about a food. It's okay if they don't take a bite.
<b>Set ground rules for mealtime behaviour</b>	Remind them to be polite if they try something they don't like. Ask them not to use words like “gross” or “yuck”.
<b>Don't use food as a reward</b>	Don't offer your child food as a reward for good behaviour or for trying other foods.
<b>Be a role model</b>	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](https://unlockfood.ca)



# Is my child's development on track?

Monitoring your child's development is an important component of ensuring their readiness for school. Your health care provider can assess your child's development, however, if you do not have a health care provider, staff at the EarlyON Child and Family Centres can support you.

EarlyON centre staff can assess your child's development using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). If there are concerns, they can connect you with the appropriate services, or offer activities that you can do with your child to support their development.

If you cannot access an EarlyON centre, and you are not sure if your child's development is on track, the SmartStart Hub can provide an assessment over the phone, and help you get connected to supports and services, if needed.



## EarlyON Child and Family Centre sites

Family Space - for a full list of locations near you, call 613-966-9427 or visit [familyspacequinte.com](http://familyspacequinte.com)

North Hastings Children's Services - for a list of locations in North Hastings, call 613-332-0179 or visit [nhcs.ca/playgroups](http://nhcs.ca/playgroups)

Trenton Military Family Resource Centre - for a list of programs and locations call 613-392-2811 ext 2382 or visit [trentonmfrc.ca/early-on](http://trentonmfrc.ca/early-on)

## Smart Start Hub

Quinte Children's Treatment Centre- for more information about SmartStart Hubs and further services and supports, call 613-969-7400 ext 2264 or visit [quintectc.com/smart-start-hub.php](http://quintectc.com/smart-start-hub.php)

# 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 responsible older 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/](https://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 [triboard.ca/newriders](https://triboard.ca/newriders)

## 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/](https://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.

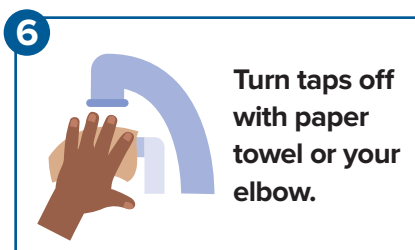
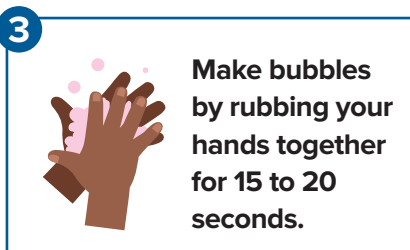
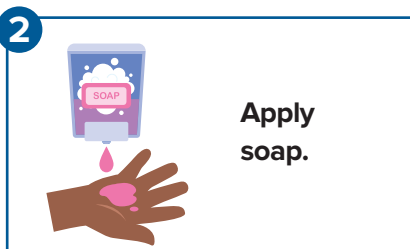
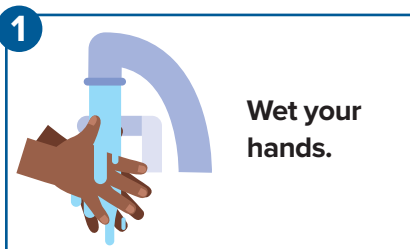
Have fun getting to school.

**Learn more about Active School Travel**

[hpePublicHealth.ca/active-school-zone-fact-sheet](https://hpePublicHealth.ca/active-school-zone-fact-sheet)

# 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 Oral Health team from public health. 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 Canadian Dental Care Program (CDCP) can assist in lowering dental costs for eligible families earning less than \$90,000 per year and who's child is under 18 years old with no access to a private dental insurance plan. For more information about the Canadian Dental Care Program, visit [Canada.ca](https://Canada.ca).



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

### **Public health dental program**

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

[hpePublicHealth.ca/kidsdental/](https://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: [optom.on.ca/find/](https://optom.on.ca/find/)



# How do I report my child's shots?

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

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 public health.  
Doctors do not automatically send immunization updates.**

## **Online**

[hpePublicHealth.ca/immunization-reporting-records](https://hpePublicHealth.ca/immunization-reporting-records)

Email a copy of your child's immunization record to [cdcimm@hpeph.ca](mailto: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 or vaping, contact:**

**Tobacco Talk Line**

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

[ttl@hpeph.ca](mailto:ttl@hpeph.ca)

**Want more information?**

Visit [hpePublicHealth.ca/school-age-children-youth](http://hpePublicHealth.ca/school-age-children-youth)

Contact [healthyschools@hpeph.ca](mailto:healthyschools@hpeph.ca)

