

Let's go to Kindergarten!

Information and tips to help prepare your child for a healthy start to Kindergarten!



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We commit to providing accessible information to all. To request this document in an alternate format, contact your closest health unit office using the contact information above.

This resource was adapted with permission from KFL&A Public Health.

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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, learn and grow in social, emotional and academic ways. It is normal for children and parents to have a mix of emotions about starting school. Know that your relationship with your child is a positive influence in stressful situations!

To help your child get ready for school, there are many things you can do as part of your regular family routines:

Talk with your child about how they feel about starting school and what to expect.

Read and use the information and tips in this booklet.

Set-up play dates with other children in small and large groups.

Pick routines that work best for your family. Some ideas for helpful ways to feel our best included eating together, choosing less screen time, moving our bodies and prioritizing sleep.

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



For More Ideas Visit:

[How Can I Prepare my Child for Kindergarten | Government of ON](#)

Connect with your Community

EarlyON child and family centres offer free drop-in programs. They are open to caregivers and children up to 6 years of age. Meet people, get advice, and learn and play with your child. Find the centre closest to you: [Find an EarlyON centre | Government of ON](#)

Starting school and facing big changes can be hard. Building resilience takes a caring community working together to support families. Check out parentinginpeterborough.ca

Engaging in your Child's Education

Being engaged in your child's education is key to setting them up for long-term well-being and school success. It also promotes healthy development and builds connection with your child.

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 every day.

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

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

[Parent Guide to the Ontario School System | Government of ON](#)



Helping Children Deal with Stress

Starting Kindergarten can be a stressful time for some children and parents. Help your child deal with stress by teaching them how to “self-regulate”, which means helping them manage their emotions.

Ask yourself:

“What happened to this child?” instead of “What is wrong with this child?”

Focus on:

Connecting, listening and responding as strategies to help.

Help children to feel good about themselves. This can be done by accepting them for who they are.

If you have questions or concerns about your child’s mental well-being, look for support options through:

Childrens Mental Health Support:

Parents and Caregivers | School Mental Health Ontario
Finding Help | Childrens Mental Health Ontario

For more tips on helping your child manage their emotions visit:

- Self-regulation Info Sheet | The Mehrit Centre
- Self-regulation for Parents | The Mehrit Centre
- Help your Child Self-regulate | Pearson Canada
- Let’s go to Kindergarten! | HPEPH
- Your Child’s Mental Health | Caring for Kids

Other Local Resources:

SmartStart Hub
What’s Available for Families
Rebound Child and Youth Services Northumberland



Kindness Matters

Teaching children about kindness and how to be kind helps them:

Learn the importance of caring for others' needs.

Feel like they belong.

Make friends.

Improve their self esteem.

Develop skills necessary to make and keep healthy relationships.



Be a good role model and foster acts of kindness:

Be kind with words:

Saying "good morning", "hello", "thank you", "how can I help you?"

Be kind with actions:

Rake leaves for a neighbour, participate in charity events, encourage taking turns and sharing, pick flowers for a friend.

Talk about kindness:

When you see your child being kind, name it and point out when they are kind to someone else.



Your Child's Immunization Record

It is a parent/caregiver's responsibility to report your child's immunizations and any updates to your local Public Health Unit. Doctors and Nurse Practitioners do not automatically send immunization updates to Public Health.

Peterborough Public Health Immunization Program

Online

Immunization Program | PPH

Mail

185 King St, Peterborough
Ontario K9J 2R8

Telephone:

705-743-1000, ext. 139

Fax:

705-743-2897



Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge (HKPR) District Health Unit Immunization Program

Online

Immunization Program | HKPR

Mail

200 Rose Glen Road, Port Hope,
Ontario L1A 3V6

Telephone:

1-866-888-4577, ext. 1507

Fax:

905-885-5352

Helpful Reminders:

Students attending school must be up-to-date with immunizations or have a valid exemption.

Your child is due for immunizations between 4 and 6 years of age.

Keep your child's immunization record updated and in a safe place.

- Option: Download **CANImmunize app** for free on iOS and Android.

For more information on how to protect children with safe and reliable vaccines:

Recommended Immunizations for Children | Immunize Canada



Healthy Sleep Habits

It is important to develop healthy sleep habits for your child. This will prepare them to learn at school. Good sleep also helps children feel calm, regulate emotions, and have fun with friends.

Tips for success at bedtime:

Have a consistent bedtime routine everyday.

Choose relaxing activities like a bath, reading from a book, or quiet chat before bed.

Avoid TV, computer time, video games, or phone use for one hour before bedtime.



Sleep guidelines:

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

Age in Years	Hours of Sleep Required
3 to 4	10 - 13 (may include a nap)
5 to 13	9 - 11



For more information on age-appropriate sleep guidelines:

[24 Hour Movement Guidelines | CSEP](#)

Positive Eating Habits at School

Kindergarten is the best time to establish positive eating habits at school. Offering a variety of nutritious food gives your child the nutrients and energy they need to learn, grow and play. Use [Canada's Food Guide](#) for ideas!



**Start your child's school day with breakfast.
Try these ideas:**

Yogurt with frozen berries topped with dry cereal

Veggie omelet with whole grain toast

Oatmeal with sliced apple and chopped nuts or seeds

Packing Lunch and Snacks for your Child

Aim for **half** of what you pack to be vegetables and fruits. Include whole grain foods and protein foods.

Lunch ideas:

Pasta salad, hard-boiled egg and carrots

Bean chili, bun and orange slices

Whole grain wrap, soy butter and canned fruit (in water or 100% juice)

Snack ideas:

Whole grain crackers, cheese and sliced peppers

Apple slices, whole grain muffin and roasted chickpeas

Sliced cucumber, hummus and pita wedges

Meal and snack tips:

Be a positive role model! Prepare and eat a variety of foods with your child.

Enjoy meals and snacks together.

Power-off devices at mealtime and use the time to connect as a family.

Offer vegetables and fruit at every meal and snack.

Get kids involved!

Kids not eating their lunch? There are a lot of new distractions! Try:

- peeling and cutting foods into bite-sized pieces,
- have them practice opening containers, and
- plan together to find foods that meet both your needs!

Student Nutrition Programs

Many schools offer nutritious free food for ALL students to help them perform their best.

Find out if your school has a program and how you can get involved!



Teach your Growing Eater

Children learn to enjoy new foods over time and at their own pace. They eat best when they and their parents each follow their jobs in feeding:



Parents/caregivers decide:

What foods to offer;

When to offer meals and snacks;

Where your child eats.

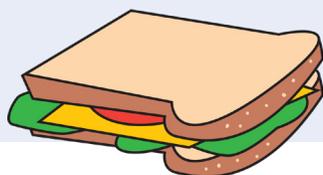
Children decide:

Which foods to eat

(from the foods you have served them);

How much to eat

(trust your child knows when they are hungry or full.)



Did You Know?

Labelling food as “healthy” or “unhealthy” does not help learning eaters. In fact, it may make them less likely to try certain foods as they assume they are less tasty.

Instead of labeling foods by healthfulness, call food by its name. For example, broccoli, candy, hamburgers, and cookies.

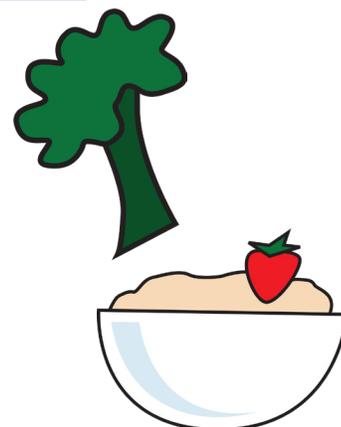
For more information on packing healthy school lunches:

Lunch Your Kids Will Munch | Peterborough Public Health

Have nutrition questions?

Contact a registered dietitian for free at **Health 811**.

Dial 811 or visit: ontario.ca/health811 to start an online chat.



Moving Our Bodies

Moving our bodies is an important part of healthy living at any age. Daily physical activity (DPA) can improve your child's physical and mental wellbeing, build their confidence and help them feel like they belong.



Moving together can be fun and simple; try:

Spending more time outside.

A daily walk or home dance party.

Thinking of activities that your child enjoys and try to turn those into opportunities to be active.

Spending time playing in an unstructured, child-led way.



For more information on Movement Guidelines:

[Early Years \(0-4\) 24 hour Movement Guidelines | CSEP](#)

For more information about activity to keep your child moving:

[Have a Ball Together | Nexus Health](#)

Getting to School Safely

You can teach your child how to get to school safely. Walking, biking, and scootering to school are great ways to incorporate movement into your child's day.

Safety Tips:

Walking:

Look both ways before crossing the street.

Walk on the sidewalk.

Follow crossing guard signals.

Biking/Scootering:

Wear a helmet.

Have a working bell.

Use hand signals.

Taking the Bus:

Listen to the bus driver.

Stand in a safe place while waiting for the bus.



For more information on bus safety visit:

[School Bus Safety | Government of ON](#)

Wondering when to transition your child into a booster seat?

[Car Seats | Parachute Canada](#)

Backpack Safety

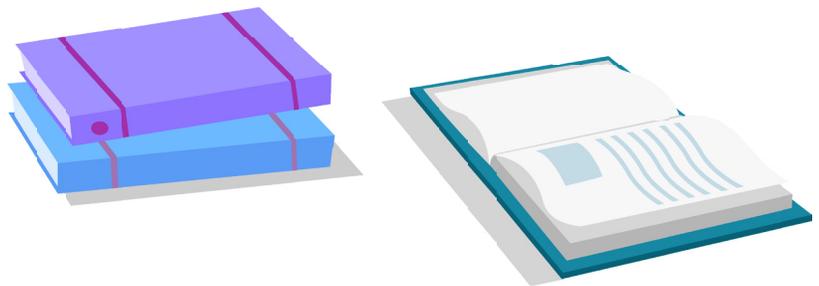
Backpacks are a convenient way for your child to transport supplies to and from school. When backpacks are used incorrectly, they can strain muscles and cause back pain.

Tips for backpack safety:

Teach your child to bend their knees to pick up the backpack with both hands.

Ensure your child uses both straps when wearing the backpack to prevent imbalances.

Lighten the load. It is recommended that children carry no more than 10-15% of their body weight in their backpacks. Only pack essentials!



Do you need a backpack?

Check out Backpacks for Kids | United Way in:

- [Northumberland](#)
- [Peterborough](#)
- Haliburton (contact haliburton@youthunlimitedkaw.com)
- City of Kawartha Lakes (contact [BGC Kawarthas](#))

For more information visit:

[Using Backpacks Safely | My Health Alberta](#)

Screen Time

Screen time should be limited to help promote a healthy lifestyle for your child and family. For children 2 to 5 years old, limit routine or regular screen time to less than 1 hour per day.

Tips to reduce screen time:

Plan screen-free meals, playtime, and bedtime routines.

Lead by example by modelling the ways you enjoy screen-free time.

Create a daily routine that balances time for movement (e.g. outdoor play), creativity (e.g. reading or art projects) and connection (e.g. games or other hobbies) to naturally reduce time spent on screens.

Avoid using screens for at least one hour before bedtime (screen time can interfere with sleep).

If screen time is needed, use screens together making it a shared activity, like watching a movie or playing a game as a family.

Be consistent.



Choosing less screen time gives your child more opportunities to:

Play.

Explore.

Sleep better.

Feel ready for being at school.

Be present at home and school.

Build self-regulation skills.

What can I do if my child is upset with screen time limits?

Set shared family limits at an early age.

Use a calm voice.

Acknowledge child's frustration.

Redirect them to another activity or toy.

For more information:

[Screen Time and Young Children | Caring for Kids](#)

[Screen Time and Mental Health | Tip Sheet](#)

Sun Safety is Important Year-Round!

Did you know 80% of your lifetime ultraviolet (UV) radiation exposure happens before 18 years? It is important to make sun safety a priority for your family.

Sun Safety Tips:

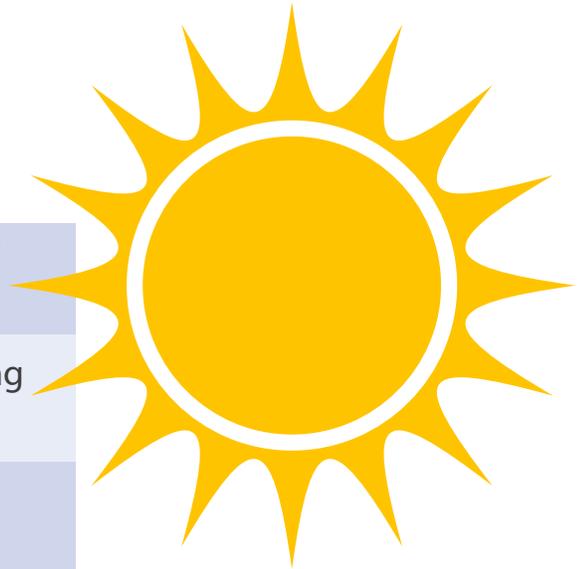
Prepare:

Apply sunscreen to your child in the morning, SPF 30 or higher.

Dress your child in loose-fitting, protective clothing made from tightly woven fabric (UV Protection).

Send your child to school with:

- A hat (wide brim is best)
- UV protection sunglasses
- Extra sunscreen
- SPF Lip Balm
- Refillable water bottle



Encourage your child to:

Play in the shade when possible (under trees, shelters, umbrellas)

Sip on water throughout the entire school day

For more information:

Enjoy the sun safely | Canadian Cancer Society



Help Create Smoke- and Vape-Free Spaces

No amount of second-hand smoke is safe.

When kids aren't around second-hand smoke or vapour they're less likely to:

Have breathing problems.

Miss school.

Get sick.

Start smoking or vaping themselves.



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



For more information:

[Second-hand Smoke | Government of Canada](#)

[Talking early and often to your kids about vaping is the best prevention | Learn the Facts](#)

For help quitting or cutting back on smoking:

Visit [Smokers' Helpline](#), talk to your health care provider or call **#811** (Health 811)

Ensuring your Child's Development is on Track

The early years of a child's life is a time when their brains and bodies develop at a fast pace. Monitoring their developmental milestones can help you determine if their development is on track.

Development Milestones

[Click here for a list of common milestones](#)

Remember every child is different and develops at their own pace. If you have questions or concerns about your child's development, it is important to speak to your child's health care provider. For more information, check out the [SmartStart Hub](#) at Five Counties Children's Centre



Helping your Child with Reading and Writing

Read aloud to your child for at least 15 minutes every day. It is the best way to help them become interested in reading.

Choose the book together.

Enjoy the same book over and over again.

Read a lot of different kinds of books, such as story, fact, poetry, and rhyming books.

Interact with your child while you read the book.

Talk about the pictures and ask questions.



How can you help your child learn to print?

Have paper, crayons and markers on hand.

Help children strengthen their hand and arm muscles used to print.

Practice with playdough, scissors, or playing ball.

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

For more information about reading and age-appropriate books:

Literacy Resources



Your Child's Speech and Language

It is important for your child to develop strong speech and language skills to do well in school. It will help them to make and keep friends, and to feel comfortable in Kindergarten. Music and songs help to develop listening skills. The repetitive nature of songs and rhymes helps to develop speech and language skills.



Hearing check:

A child's hearing can be affected by many things during their early years, including ear infections. When a child is unable to hear properly, their speech and language can be affected. If you are concerned about your child's hearing, speak to their health care provider.

**For more information about speech,
language and hearing:**

SmartStart Hub at Five Counties Children's Centre



Oral Health is Important

Good oral health plays an important role in our general health.

Help your child care for their teeth by:

Brushing teeth 2 times per day for at least 2 minutes.

- Using a pea-sized amount of toothpaste with fluoride.
- Helping your child to brush their teeth.
- Changing your child's toothbrush every 3 months or when the bristles lose their shape, and after an illness.

Flossing your child's teeth every day.

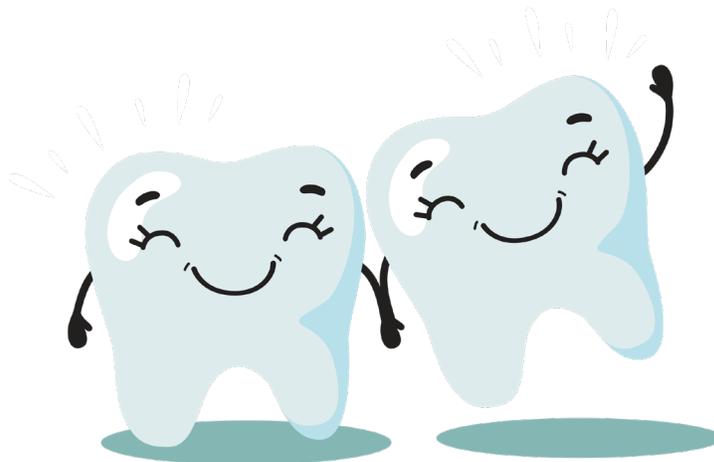
Limiting sugary and sticky snacks (e.g., raisins, fruit leather).

Choosing water to sip during the school day. Limit other drinks to mealtime.

Visiting the dentist every 6-9 months.

Lift the Lip

- Lift up your child's lip often to check for anything on the teeth or in the mouth.
- Look for chalky or brown spots on their teeth.
- If found, contact your oral health professional or public health.



Dental care and screening

In-school screening

Oral health staff visit elementary schools to conduct oral health screening every year. This includes a quick look into the mouth with a sterilized mouth mirror. Findings will be shared with parents. This visual screening does not replace a child's regular visit to the dentist.

Dental care

Free dental care is available for eligible children and youth 17 years of age and under, through the Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO) program.

Call your local health unit for more information.

HKPR District Health Unit (Alderville First Nations, CKL and Haliburton County):

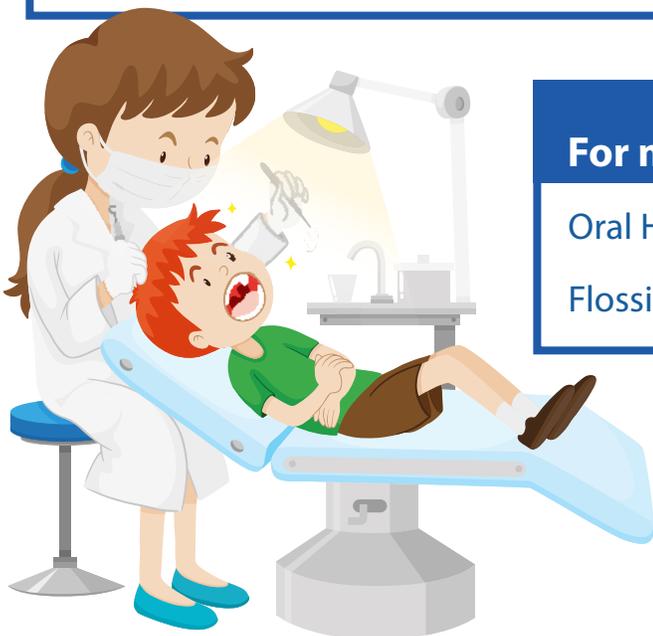
1-866-888-4577, ext. 1247

or for more information on oral health programs for children, see: [Financial Assistance for Dental Treatment | HKPR](#)

Peterborough Public Health (Curve Lake and Hiawatha First Nations, and the County and City of Peterborough):

705-743-1000, ext. 265

or for more information on oral health programs for children, see: [Oral Health | Peterborough Public Health](#)



For more information:

[Oral Health Tips | Government of Canada](#)

[Flossing and Brushing | Canadian Dental Association](#)

Gear Up for School with an Eye Exam

Annual eye exams are free for school-aged children 19 years and younger with a valid Ontario health card.

Vision problems are common in children. They can impact:

Learning

Social development

Physical or everyday activities



To ensure ideal vision and development, children should have an eye exam. Begin eye exams at 6 months of age. Your child should have an eye exam before starting kindergarten and each year after.

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

[Find an optometrist | College of Optometrists of Ontario](#)

For more information about vision:

ontario.ca/childvision

Eye See Eye Learn Program:

Some optometrists participate in the **Eye See Eye Learn Program**, which provides one pair of cost-free eyeglasses to eligible children who are enrolled in junior or senior kindergarten. To learn more, visit:

[Eye See Eye Learn Program | Ontario Association of Optometrists](#)



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Healthy Habits

Teaching your child to wash their hands is an important way to keep them healthy.



When should my child wash their hands?

Before and After:

Eating / drinking

Playing / using shared equipment

Playing in a playground

After:

Using the bathroom

Coughing, sneezing

Blowing your nose

Playing with pets

Returning inside from an outdoor activity

Remember:

Handwashing with soap and water is best! Your child could use alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHR) when their hands are not visibly dirty. When you do not have access to running water, wipe dirty hands with towelettes and then use ABHR.

For more information:

[Handwashing for Parents and Children | Caring for Kids](#)

Lessons to learn about coughing & sneezing:

Teach your child to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when they cough or sneeze.

Teach your child to cough/sneeze into their upper sleeve/elbow.

Put used tissues in the waste basket and have them wash their hands using soap and water or hand sanitizer.



For more information:

[Common Infections and Your Child | Caring for Kids](#)

Illness and School

It is important for your child to stay home when they are sick or feeling unwell.

It is important to pre-screen our children before entering an indoor public place, such as a school.

Use the Ministry of Health screening tool each day:

[Self-assessment | Government of Ontario](#)

For more information about respiratory illnesses visit:

[Respiratory illness: health and safety measures in schools | Government of Ontario](#)

Also, visit your school board website for their illness policies.

For more information:

If you are not sure if your child should stay home from school, contact your health care provider.

If you do not have a health care provider visit:

[Find a doctor or nurse practitioner | Government of Ontario](#)

Masking

Wearing a mask can help to protect your child from respiratory illnesses. While not required, you and your child can choose to wear a mask while at school or in the community for added protection.



For more information:

[Masks and Children During Viral Season | Government of Ontario](#)

Stay Connected

If you have questions about these or other topics, please contact your closest HKNP Health Unit office.

Residents of **Peterborough County and City, Curve Lake and Hiawatha First Nations**

call 705-743-1000 | or toll free 1-877-743-0101

or visit www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca

Residents of **Haliburton County, Northumberland County, City of Kawartha Lakes and Alderville First Nations**

call 1-866-888-4577

or visit www.hkpr.on.ca

