

7 back-to-school tips for kids



Back-to-school season is upon us. Let's take a look at some much-needed precautions and health tips to help kids stay well this season.

1 Know when to keep your child home from school.

Illnesses and conditions that children commonly contract include:

Conditions that commonly affect children

- Allergies
- Cold
- Cough
- Diarrhea
- Flu
- Lice
- Pink eye
- Rash
- Sore throat
- Upper respiratory infection
- Upset stomach

Other common illnesses

- Animal and insect bites
- Bronchitis
- Cold sores
- Sinusitis
- Tonsillitis

Especially when you're dealing with highly contagious illnesses such as flu, lice, pink eye or strep throat, letting children miss a few days of school can help them recover and protect other students, parents and teachers. Be sure to follow local guidelines and school rules for when you must keep your children home from school.

At minimum, you should keep your kids home when they have the following symptoms:

- fever of 100.4°F or higher
- severe or constant cough
- difficulty breathing
- headache or muscle aches
- exhaustion and extreme fussiness
- red eyes with a yellowish or cloudy discharge
- they've vomited or had diarrhea in the last 24 hours
- rash
- extremely sore throat with red or white patches
- severely hurting ears
- a cold for more than 10 days

2 Have them get a flu shot.

Children 6 months and older can get the flu vaccine each year. This is especially important for children with asthma, heart disease, diabetes, weakened immune systems or obesity.¹

3 Teach kids to wash their hands properly.

Ensure that children:



use warm water and plenty of soap



lather up to their lower arms, between fingers and under their nails for 20 seconds (teach them a little song to sing for 20 seconds)



rinse with clean, warm water



dry their hands thoroughly with paper towels

4 Retrain kids in properly covering their cough

Teach kids to avoid coughing into their hands, which can easily spread germs. Rather, kids should cough into the fabric of a sleeve or pull out the neck of the shirt and cough toward their chest. Better yet, wearing masks or face coverings will help prevent the spread of germs from coughs and sneezes among schoolchildren.

5 Reinforce what social distancing means

For kids returning to in-person school, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is recommending universal masking and 3 feet of social distancing. Demonstrate a 3-foot measurement and encourage them to stay that distance from other students and teachers. "Physical distancing" is a more accurate descriptor: Kids can still socialize, play and learn while maintaining a physical distance.

6 Have kids eat healthily, drink lots of water and get plenty of sleep

To boost their immune systems, kids should eat plenty of fresh, nutrient-rich fruits and vegetables. And here's a guideline for daily water intake based on age and gender (from the National Sleep Foundation):^{3,4}

- Children between 6 and 13 should sleep 9 to 11 hours
- Teens up to 17 should sleep 8 to 10 hours and no fewer than 7 hours

Age	Gender	Glasses (ounces)
4 to 8	Boys and girls	5 (40 oz.)
9 to 13	Girls	7 (56 oz.)
	Boys	8 (64 oz.)
14 to 18	Girls	8 (64 oz.)
	Boys	11 (88 oz.)

7 Let them play outside

Children from the ages of 6 to 17 should get at least one hour of moderate to vigorous activity every day to improve their fitness and increase their resistance to illness. According to the CDC, they should include 180 minutes (one hour, three times a week) of these types of activities:



aerobic exercises to improve their cardiovascular system (heart and lungs)—jogging, playing soccer, swimming



weight-bearing exercises to strengthen their bones—running, jumping rope, climbing stairs, dancing



muscle-building exercises, which also strengthen connective tissues (ligaments and tendons)—situps, pushups, use of elastic exercise bands and plenty of stretching to reduce chance of injury

Supporting your kids' healthy development and keeping their immune systems strong will give them the best opportunity to learn, grow and play. By following the tips above, you and your kids can be prepared for this back-to-school season.

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