



**northern health**  
the northern way of caring



## Health Tips for Kindergarten

This booklet is produced by Northern Health and is intended for caregivers of children aged 4-6 years who are just entering or have entered the school system. The booklet outlines key messages to support the development of your child/children. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's development, or about the information in the booklet, please discuss with your health care provider.

### You can support your child to:

- ✓ Know the name and phone number of their parent or emergency contact.
- ✓ Walk to and from school with a responsible person.
- ✓ Know and obey the basic rules of traffic and playground safety.
- ✓ Use a helmet (and other appropriate safety gear) when riding their bike, trike or skateboard.
- ✓ Get 9-11 hours of sleep each night.
- ✓ Get at least 60 minutes of active play each day.
- ✓ Limit sedentary screen time to less than two hours per day.
- ✓ Prevent colds and sickness by washing their hands before eating or handling food and after using the toilet, playing outside, playing in dirt or sand, and playing with animals.

## Immunizations

Children between the ages of 4 and 6 years need booster vaccines to protect them from childhood diseases. Please contact your healthcare provider to find out when Kindergarten immunization clinics will be held and to book an appointment.

## Smoke and vapour

Children who are exposed to second or third-hand smoke, or vapour, may be at increased risk of developing colds and illnesses.

To decrease exposure it is recommended for those who smoke commercial tobacco products, cannabis, e-cigarettes, or vapour to do so outside, not in a vehicle or house, and not near open windows, doorways or air intakes.

## Eating and feeding

- A balanced breakfast provides energy to learn and play. Simple meals, like peanut butter and banana on toast, or cereal with milk and a piece of fruit, are great options.
- Aim to pack a lunch and snack(s) that includes protein foods, whole grains, vegetables and fruit.
- Offer water for thirst. Pack a leak-proof water bottle.
- Instead of fruit juice or other sugary drinks, offer fresh or canned whole fruit.
- Let children decide how much to eat and in what order to eat their food. Communicate this to school staff, if needed.
- Avoid labelling foods as “healthy”, “unhealthy” or “treats”, as this changes the appeal of certain foods and does not help children feel positively about food.
- Find opportunities to involve kids in packing their own lunch – this builds their food skills and comfort with a variety of foods.
- Plan for a sit-down after-school snack, at least one hour before dinner-time.
- Sit together and share meals, when possible. Focus on talking and connecting.

For more information, visit the Northern Health Nutrition page: [northernhealth.ca/health-topicsnutrition](https://northernhealth.ca/health-topicsnutrition)



## Vision

- Healthy eyes and good vision are an important part of your child's development.
- BC Doctors of Optometry (eye doctors) recommend that children have:
  - At least one eye exam between ages two to five years.
  - Yearly exams while in school (covered by BC's medical services plan until 18 years of age, but there may be a small fee charged by the optometrist).
- If you have questions or concerns about your child's eye health, please connect with an optometrist. [members.optometrists.bc.ca/membership/find-a-doctor.html](https://members.optometrists.bc.ca/membership/find-a-doctor.html)

## Hearing

Hearing plays an important role in your child's ability to learn, talk, and relate to others. Your child's hearing should be checked if they:

- Use speech that other people can't understand
- Have trouble hearing certain sounds
- Ask you to repeat things
- Have very loud or soft speech
- Have trouble hearing in noisy situations
- Do not respond when spoken to from behind

If your child has missed the hearing screening or you have concerns about your child's hearing, please see your health care provider.

## Dental health

- Cavities are an infection that can spread from caregivers to a child and from tooth to tooth.
- Helping your child brush with a pea sized amount of fluoride toothpaste two times per day is the best way to prevent cavities.
- Adult molars start erupting around age 6. Sealants can help protect the chewing surfaces of these back molar teeth from getting cavities. Talk to your dentist about having sealants placed on your child's back teeth.
- Seeing a dentist regularly can help find dental problems early before they become larger problems. This will also help keep costs down.

If your child has not seen a dentist and you are unable to access a dental office because of fear, finances, special needs or have questions, please call the Northern Health Dental staff in your area.

## Speech and language

Is your child able to:

- ✓ Pay attention to a story and answer simple questions
- ✓ Easily follow directions
- ✓ Easily tell you what has happened at a friend's house or at preschool
- ✓ Use adult-like grammar in sentences
- ✓ Speak in a way that is understood by other children and adults

If you have concerns about your child's speech or language development, please discuss with your school about having a speech and language assessment done for your child.



# Have Fun and Stay Safe

## Being active

- An ideal 24 hours includes high amounts of activity at various intensities, low amounts of sedentary screen time, and enough, high quality sleep.
- Our bodies were made to move! Support children to get at least one hour of active play every day – more is better.
- Limit sedentary screen time to less than two hours per day.
- Get outside if possible: trading indoor time for outdoor time often increases activity levels, which will help your child sleep better.
- Be active as a family as much as possible: active parents raise active children, who then tend to become active adults – it's the best kind of cycle!



## Safety on the road

- It is the law in BC that children are secured in a car seat or booster seat until they are 9 years old or 145cm (4'9").
- Your child needs the correct car seat or booster seat for their age and size according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Refer to the car seat and booster seat manuals for details.

For more information: [bcaa.com/community/child-car-seat-safety](https://bcaa.com/community/child-car-seat-safety)

Teach your child to be a safe pedestrian:

- Look: show your child how to make eye contact with drivers before crossing.
- Listen: be sure your child can hear approaching traffic that may be hard to see.
- Be Seen: dress your child in bright clothing and/or reflective gear.
- Map out your child's walking route with them.
- Teach your child the rules of the road.
- Set a good example.
- Teach your child to use extra caution around parked cars where it is more difficult for drivers to see them.
- Only cross railway tracks at designated crossings.

For more information: [icbc.com/road-safety/teaching/Pages/road-safety-for-your-kids.aspx](https://icbc.com/road-safety/teaching/Pages/road-safety-for-your-kids.aspx)

## Safety at play

- Children need to explore their environment to learn how to navigate risks and avoid serious injuries.
- Get your family into the helmet habit! In BC, bicycle helmets are required by law and winter and sport helmets are recommended. For more information: [parachute.ca/en/injury-topic/helmets/](https://parachute.ca/en/injury-topic/helmets/)
- Learn to prevent and recognize concussions: [cattonline.com/](https://cattonline.com/)

## Playground safety

### Children

- Play on equipment they can reach on their own
- Dress for safe play. Wear proper footwear and remove helmets, scarves, and drawstrings

### Parents

- Stay alert, pay attention and actively supervise children while playing

### Community

- Get involved with playground safety. Ensure equipment is in good condition and has safe, soft landing surfaces.

# Health Information

## Does your child have a serious medical condition?

Serious medical conditions include anaphylaxis, diabetes, seizure disorder, severe asthma, blood clotting disorders and serious heart conditions.

At the beginning of each school year give the school information about your child's serious medical condition. Complete the medical forms available at the school.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact your school or your health care provider.

## Is your child too sick to go to school?

Keep children at home if they have:

- A fever, and keep them home for 24 hours after the fever is gone
- Vomiting or diarrhea, and keep them home for 24 hours after the last episode
- A severe or sore throat
- A rash with no known cause
- A severe cough, especially with other symptoms like a runny nose and headache
- Redness, swelling or discharge of the eyes, ears, or skin, unless treated
- Been acting unwell and have little energy to join in school activities

A Quick Guide to Common Childhood Diseases can be found here: [bccdc.ca/schools/Documents/EN\\_Guide\\_Childhood\\_Diseases.pdf](https://bccdc.ca/schools/Documents/EN_Guide_Childhood_Diseases.pdf)

## Questions about head lice?

Anyone can catch head lice – please check your child's head each week.

For more information on head lice (and other health topics) visit the Northern Health School and Youth Health page: [northernhealth.ca/health-topics/school-youth-health](https://northernhealth.ca/health-topics/school-youth-health)

## Want more information on any health topic?

Dial 811 or go to: [healthlinkbc.ca/](https://healthlinkbc.ca/)

To speak with a:

- ✓ Registered Nurse 24 hours per day, every day of the year.
- ✓ Registered Dietitian every weekday from 9 am to 5 pm (PST).
- ✓ Pharmacists every night of the week from 5 pm to 9 am (PST).
- ✓ Qualified Exercise Professional every weekday from 9 am to 5 pm (PST).



**northern health**  
the northern way of caring



#HealthyNorth

[northernhealth.ca](http://northernhealth.ca)