

Back to School Health Checklist

Getting your child ready in the fall for school involves more than just purchasing shiny new school supplies and trendy clothing. It also involves updating your child's immunizations, making appointments for routine screening tests and informing the school of any health issues your child may have. Keep track of everything during this busy time with this handy back-to-school health checklist:

- Immunization:** Ensure your child's preschool immunization is completed prior to entering Kindergarten to protect her against vaccine-preventable diseases. The Hepatitis B immunization is provided to Grade 5 students annually and Grade 9 students receive boosters for tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis.
- Vision screening:** Have your child's vision tested before he starts Kindergarten (ideally by age three) and annually until age 18. As much as 80% of learning is visual, so ensuring children can see properly will help them reach their full potential in the classroom. The cost of eye exams for children up to 18 years of age is covered by Alberta Health.
- Hearing/speech screening:** If you suspect your child may have a hearing or speech problem, check with your doctor for a referral to an audiologist and/or speech specialist. An undetected problem could interfere with your child's learning.
- Dental checkup:** Regular dental checkups should begin by age three. If your child hasn't had her teeth examined prior to starting school, now is a good time for it. Regular checkups and cleanings help detect and prevent dental problems early.
- Emergency contacts:** Make sure the school has up-to-date emergency numbers, including contact information for parents, physicians, etc.
- Health conditions:** Ensure the school has up-to-date information about any physical impairments or medical conditions your child may have, including allergies. Also inform the school about any medications your child takes.
- Backpack basics:** Your child's backpack should fit properly and shouldn't be too heavy for him to carry. It shouldn't be more than 10% to 15% of his body weight and should have broad shoulder straps and a waist strap that keeps the bag firmly on the spine. Watch for warning signs that the bag may be too heavy to carry such as sore shoulders or changes in posture. For more information visit <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/577.asp>.
- Nutrition plan:** Ensure your child has a healthy breakfast before heading to school in the mornings, and help her pack a nutritious lunch. Planning meals ahead of time and involving children in planning and preparation can make this task more manageable and fun.