

# A Healthy Start to School



# Important Phone Numbers

*Keep these by your phone!*

**Ambulance, Police, Fire: 911**

**Poison Control: 428-8161 or 1-800-565-8161**

<b>MSI:</b>	Toll free:	1-800-563-8880
	Within Halifax Regional Municipality:	468-9700

**Doctor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Teacher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Local Public Health Services Office:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(see pages 44 - 46)

# A Healthy Start to School



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The Nova Scotia Department of Health gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the school health teams, parents and teachers in the Western Health Region whose assistance has made this book possible.

We would also like to acknowledge:

Nobody's Perfect and Ready or Not!, for their inspiration and successful model for presenting information to parents.

The Feeling Good Inside & Out project at the IWK Grace Health Centre for their information on healthy body image.

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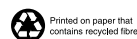
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Public Health Services

[www.gov.ns.ca/health/PublicHealth](http://www.gov.ns.ca/health/PublicHealth)



**S**tarting school is a big step in a child's life — and in a family's life too. New people, new places, new routines, new experiences... it can take a while to get used to it all.

It's good to know that you're not alone. Your child's education is a team effort for you, your child, your child's teacher and your school.

We want you to know that your child's health is a team effort too. Your Public Health Team is made up of a public health nurse, licensed practical nurse, nutritionist, dental hygienist and health educator. The Public Health Team visits schools to offer advice, support and programs for students, parents and teachers.

Your Public Health Team can help you with issues like safety, disease prevention, parenting, active living and healthy eating. Any parent or community group can call the nearest local Public Health Services office and ask for someone from the Public Health Team to discuss a health issue that you'd like to learn more about. Phone numbers are listed in the last section of this book.

We hope this book will answer some of the health questions you may have now that your child is starting school. The book is divided into six sections:

- "Off to a Healthy Start" suggests things you can do to keep your child healthy at school
- "School Health and Safety" covers your child's health needs for school
- "Healthy Eating" contains information about school food policies as well as ideas for healthy breakfasts, lunches and snacks
- "Keeping Kids Healthy" offers information that you'll find helpful as your child moves through the school years
- "Preventing the Spread of Illness" tells you about diseases that you may hear more about now that your child will be spending more time with a larger group of kids
- "Public Health Services" offers a list of addresses, phone and fax numbers to contact for further information

Your child's school years are a time of growth, change and excitement. Enjoy them!

We hope the information in this book will help you and your child to have a healthy start in school.

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# Off to a Healthy Start

## Parents Do Make a Difference

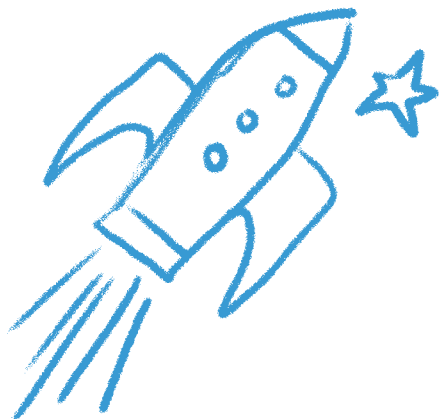
Starting school is an exciting time for parents and children. It can also be a scary time for small children and for parents thinking about their little one going off alone.

Parents have an important role to play in making their child's first experience with school happy and healthy. There's a lot you can do to help!

## Get to Know Your Child's School

Your child will be healthier and happier in school if you show you care about what he or she is doing. Let your child know you care about school:

- Know the names of the teachers and the principal. Keep in touch with your child's teacher.
- Know who your child plays with at school. Know the names of his or her friends.
- Know what your child is learning and studying. Talk with your child about school. Listen when he or she talks to you about it.
- Go to parent-teacher meetings and support school activities.



## Learn About School Policies

All schools have policies that guide how they handle issues like discipline, foods available at school, safety, poison prevention, taking medicine during school and emergency care, like using epi-pens with children who have life threatening allergies. Find out what your school's policies are and help your child to learn and follow them.

## Tell the School if Your Child Has Special Health Needs

Be sure to tell the school if your child has a health problem such as a severe allergy, diabetes or seizures. You will need to discuss your child's condition and any special needs with all school staff members. This includes teachers, bus drivers, food service staff and playground supervisors.

## Help Out at School if You Can

Parents who have the time can work with other parents to make school safe and healthy. You can do this by joining the Home and School Association. If your school doesn't have a Home and School, you can work with other parents to start one. Parents can work together to look at things like playground safety, supervision for kids before and after school, the kinds of food that are available in the school, how fundraising is done and many other issues.



## Help Your Child Get Used to School Rules

The kind of behaviour that is expected in school may be different from what your child has been used to at home or in preschool. Teachers have many children in the class and it is important for your child to understand that everyone needs to cooperate. Find out about your school's policy on discipline and talk with your child's teacher if you have any concerns.

## Support Your Child

New experiences, even ones we're looking forward to, can be stressful. Help your child get used to the idea of going to school. Talk about what it will be like and listen when your child talks about what he or she expects or is worried about. Visit the school with your child and meet the teachers. You can also practice things like walking to the bus stop or to school and packing lunches and snacks.

Getting used to being part of a class, adjusting to new rules and learning how to get along with the teacher can be difficult for some children. Keep an eye on your child's behaviour and watch for changes that may show that your child's self esteem is suffering. These could be things like:

- not wanting to go to school
- not wanting to talk about school
- crying
- changes from the way your child normally eats, sleeps or acts

If you notice any of these changes talk with your child and your child's teacher. This is a time when your child will need extra love and support. See the section of this book called "Self-Esteem" for some ideas on how to help your child feel good about him or herself. If you are very worried, talk to your family doctor or public health nurse.

## Talk to the School About Your Concerns

If you have a concern about what your child is learning, how your child is adapting to school, how your child is getting along with the other kids, or any other issue, first call or meet with the teacher to talk about it. If you are still concerned after talking with the teacher, talk with the principal. If you are still not satisfied, go to the school board.

Don't be embarrassed to talk to the teacher about something that seems small. It is best for everyone if a small problem can be taken care of before it becomes a big problem.



# School Health and Safety

## Immunization

Starting school makes it more likely that your child could catch common childhood diseases. Immunization can protect your child from several of these. It's important that immunizations be kept up-to-date because illnesses can spread easily among children in a classroom.

Before school starts it is important to make sure that your child's immunizations are up-to-date. He or she should have a DaPTP (Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Polio) and MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) booster. Your child should also have a Varicella vaccine between the ages of one and six if not immune. The DaPTP and MMR boosters and the Varicella vaccine can be given during the same visit to the doctor or Public Health Nurse.

If your child suffers from a chronic illness, such as asthma or heart, lung or kidney disease, he or she will require an annual flu shot. This becomes especially important when your child starts school since flu can spread quickly in a classroom. It is also important to ask the doctor if your child requires a Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine.

Check this schedule to see if your child's immunizations are up-to-date. If they're not, see your doctor or contact your local Public Health Services office. If your child has not had all the required shots by September, a Public Health Nurse may contact you.

All children can receive the following immunization at school-based clinics conducted by local public health nurses:

- Hepatitis B
- dTap (Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis) booster
- Meningococcal Group C conjugate
- Varicella, if not immune

**DID YOU KNOW:** Adults need a Tetanus and Diphtheria booster every 10 years? Your health is important to your children!



## Routine Immunization Schedule

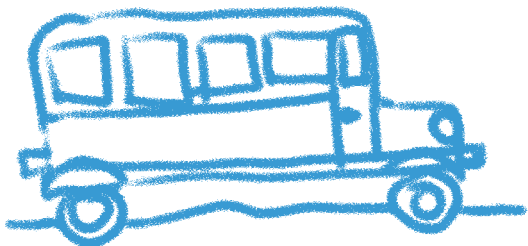
AGE	VACCINE	PROTECTS AGAINST
2 months	1 dose DaPTP, Hib	Diphtheria, Pertussis (Whooping Cough), Tetanus, Poliomyelitis (Polio), and Haemophilus Influenza type b
	1 dose Pneumococcal conjugate (For babies born January 2005 and after)	Bacterial meningitis, pneumonia, otitis media
4 months	1 dose DaPTP, Hib	Diphtheria, Pertussis (Whooping Cough), Tetanus, Poliomyelitis (Polio), and Haemophilus Influenza type b
	1 dose Pneumococcal conjugate (For babies born January 2005 and after)	Bacterial meningitis, pneumonia, otitis media
6 months	1 dose DaPTP, Hib	Diphtheria, Pertussis (Whooping Cough), Tetanus, Poliomyelitis (Polio), and Haemophilus Influenza type b
	1 dose Pneumococcal conjugate (For babies born January 2005 and after)	Bacterial meningitis, pneumonia, otitis media
12 months	1 dose MMR	Measles, Mumps and Rubella (German Measles)
	1 dose Varicella	Varicella (Chickenpox)
	1 dose Meningococcal Group C conjugate (For babies born January 2004 and after)	Meningococcal Group C disease
18 months	1 dose DaPTP, Hib	Diphtheria, Pertussis (Whooping Cough), Tetanus, Poliomyelitis (Polio), and Haemophilus Influenza type b
	1 dose Pneumococcal conjugate (For babies born January 2005 and after)	Bacterial meningitis, pneumonia, otitis media
4 to 6 years	1 dose DaPTP	Diphtheria, Pertussis (Whooping Cough), Tetanus and Poliomyelitis (Polio)
	1 dose MMR	Measles, Mumps and Rubella (German Measles)
12 months to 6 years	1 dose Varicella, if not immune	Varicella (Chickenpox)
Grade 4	3 doses Hep B	Hepatitis B
	1 dose Meningococcal Group C conjugate (Starting September, 2005)	Meningococcal Group C disease
14 to 16 years	1 dose dTap	Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis
	1 dose Meningococcal Group C conjugate	Meningococcal Group C disease
Adults every 10 years	1 dose Td	Tetanus, Diphtheria
Annually for Children 6-23 months and adults & children at high risk, healthcare workers, students in a healthcare program, firefighters and police officers	1 dose Influenza (2 doses for children < 9 years NOT immunized before)	Various strains of Influenza (Flu)
Adults & Children Two years or older at high risk	1 dose Pneumococcal Polysaccharide	Pneumococcal pneumonia, bacteraemia and meningitis

## Walking to School Safely

Walking to school everyday is a great way to increase your child's physical activity. Although many parents walk with their children when they first start school, most children soon want to walk with their friends. When they walk to school without you, they need to know safety rules and understand why they must follow them.

To help keep your child safe:

- Make up a schedule for walking to and from school.  
Your child should get used to leaving home on time and getting to school on time. Children also need to know when you expect them to arrive at home after school.  
You should allow enough time so that your child doesn't have to rush, but not so much that he or she has time to fool around.
- Pick the safest route to school.  
Pick the route to school that has the least traffic, the fewest intersections and the most sidewalks. Practice walking the route with your child. It is also a good idea to teach your child another safe route to school in case the regular route is cut off for some reason.
- Encourage your children not to walk alone.  
Walking with a friend or in a group is safest. Parents can organize a "Walking School Bus" in their neighbourhood, where parents or other volunteers take turns walking all the children to school by "picking children up" along the way.



- Teach your child some basic safety rules. Be sure your child understands that:
  - It is not safe to run out from between parked cars or to play in the street.
  - The only safe place to cross the street is at the corner. It is not safe to jay walk.
  - When crossing the street, look in all directions to make sure no traffic is coming and it is safe to cross.
  - When walking along a road, it is safest to walk along the left side, facing the traffic.
  - Walk straight to school and straight home after school. It is not safe to talk to strangers or take rides with strangers.

It is a good idea to dress your child in bright colours so that he or she is easy to see, especially on rainy, cloudy or dark days.

## Safety on the School Bus

If your child travels on a school bus, make sure he or she understands and follows the school rules for how to behave on the bus. These rules are in place to help make the trip to and from school a safe one.

You should also show your child a safe place to stand while waiting for the bus. Be sure your child understands that it is dangerous to play near the road while waiting for the bus to arrive.

Most school bus accidents happen while children are getting on or off the bus. These accidents happen when the bus driver can't see the child and hits him or her while pulling away, or when the child is hit by a car that doesn't stop for the flashing school bus lights.

The best way to protect your child from these kinds of accidents is to take him or her to and from the bus stop and help him or her on and off the bus. If this isn't possible, talk to the bus driver about the

safest way to get on and off the bus and then practice this with your child.

You'll find more information on safety in the section on "Keeping Kids Healthy During the Elementary Years."

## Vision Screening

It is likely that the first Public Health Team member that your child will meet will be the nurse who tests his or her eyes during vision screening.

All children have their vision tested as part of the school health program when they are in grade primary or before they enter school.

The results of this test will be shared with you and with your child's teacher. Vision testing is done when your child starts school because it is important to catch any problems right away. Catching vision problems early means that they can be corrected before they cause your child to fall behind in school.

It's a good idea to have your child's vision tested by an eye doctor (optometrist) before he or she starts school and on a regular basis throughout the school years. An eye examination every two years is covered by MSI until your child's 9th birthday.

## Hearing and Speech

Your child's hearing is precious. A hearing loss that isn't noticed and treated will slow your child's speech and language development. This makes it more difficult for your child to connect with other people and can cause social, emotional and learning problems.

Parents are in the best position to notice hearing loss in their child.

Ask yourself:

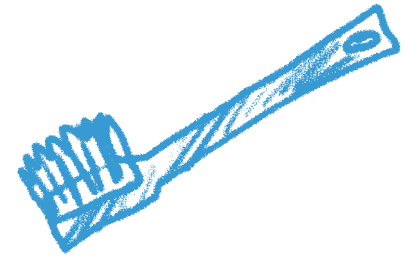
- Does your child react to sounds and respond to voices the way other children do?
- Does your child seem to be speaking as well as other children who are the same age?
- Does your child often have ear infections that seem to linger?
- Has your child had any illnesses (like scarlet fever or mumps) or taken any medications that might cause hearing loss?
- Does your family have a history of hearing loss in childhood?

If you have questions or concerns about your child's speech or response to sound, contact the Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech Clinic nearest you. Contact numbers are listed in the back of this book.

## Dental Health

Helping your child learn good dental health habits is the start of a lifetime of

healthy teeth and gums. Get each day off to a healthy start by making sure your child brushes well after breakfast.



Some good habits for healthy teeth:

- **Brush twice a day** to remove plaque from teeth and gums. Plaque is a sticky layer of germs that forms on teeth and gums. It can cause cavities and gum disease if it isn't removed.  
When brushing:
  - Use a soft bristled brush.
  - Use only a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste and spit out the toothpaste after brushing.
  - Brush for the length of a song (about 2 or 3 minutes).
  - Children need help brushing their teeth every day until they are able to do it on their own (usually by age 8).

- **Floss between your child's teeth once a day.** This will remove plaque from between teeth and under the gums. Parents will need to help with their child's flossing until he/she is about 10 years old.
- **Check your child's teeth often.** If you notice any brown or white spots on your child's teeth, call a dentist. If they're not treated, these spots can lead to tooth decay.

Between the ages of 4 and 6, children begin to lose their primary teeth. Watch for your child's 6-year molars to come in behind the last primary teeth. Check with your dentist or dental hygienist to see if these molars need sealants. (A sealant is a thin plastic material that protects the teeth.)

- **Protect your child's teeth.** Teach your child not to chew on things like pencils and to be careful when playing on swings, slides and other playground equipment. When your child starts to play sports — neighbourhood games like street hockey as well as organized sports — encourage him or her to use a mouthguard. If your child injures a tooth, call your dentist right away.
- **Pack healthy snacks for your child to eat at school.** Sticky, sugary snacks cling to the teeth and cause tooth decay. Fresh fruits and vegetables, milk products, 100% pure fruit juices, and whole grain crackers, muffins, and bread sticks are snacks that are both nutritious and friendly to teeth.
- **Take your child to the dentist regularly.** Six months after the first tooth appears or by one year of age (whichever comes first) children should have regular visits to the dentist. With regular visits, the dentist can catch problems before they become serious. Your dentist can also give you

advice on preventing tooth decay and explain which services are covered by the MSI Children's Oral Health Program. You can also call QuickCard Solutions toll-free number: 1-888-846-9199. In the Halifax Regional Municipality, call: 832-3253.

### **School-based Fluoride Mouthrinse Program**

Fluoride mouthrinse also helps to build healthy teeth by allowing fluoride to coat the outer surface of teeth. This makes the tooth enamel stronger and more able to resist cavities. Public Health Services offers a weekly fluoride mouthrinse program to children in grades primary through six in selected elementary schools across Nova Scotia. The program is coordinated and supported by Public Health Dental Hygienists and delivered by trained volunteers. If your child attends a school where the program is offered, a consent form and fact sheet on the program will be sent home early in the school year.

### **Indoor Air Quality at School**

Children spend a large part of the day in school. This means that a comfortable and healthy school environment is important to their health, well-being and ability to learn.

Some parents, especially those whose children suffer from asthma and allergies, may be concerned about the quality of the air in their child's school. Comfort and the quality of the air can be affected by temperature, humidity, the amount of fresh air and the operation and maintenance of the air handling system (if your child's school has one). Dust, certain kinds of mould, school renovations and the vapours some products release into the air can also affect the health and comfort of students and teachers.

If you are worried about air quality or health problems that may be affected by the physical environment at your child's school, talk with your child's teacher and principal

to try to find out what exactly is causing the problem. Changes in the kinds of products used in the school or improvements in the way the school is cleaned may solve the problem. Changes in the operation of the air handling units may also help.

If you are still concerned, you can contact the school board, your local office of the Department of Environment and Labour or your local Public Health Services office.

## Bullying

Bullying is repeated, harmful acts or cruel behaviour against another person. It can include:

- Rejecting or excluding a child from a group
- Name-calling, put-downs, teasing, humiliation
- Saying mean or cruel things about a child
- Hitting, kicking or hurting physically
- Frightening or threatening
- Damaging belongings

Bullying is a serious issue and school is a place where bullying can happen. Bullying affects all children, whether they are bullies, victims of a bully, or see others being bullied. The effects of bullying can last a lifetime.

Unfortunately, most bullying goes unnoticed and unreported. Teachers, students, support staff, parents and administrators need to work as a team to take action against bullying.

### How should my child react to bullying?

*If your child sees someone being bullied, tell him or her to:*

- Be a friend for the victim.
- Never join in with the bullying. Never encourage a bully.
- Ask a teacher or other adult to stop the bullying. Sometimes it might feel safer if a group of children tell their teacher about the bullying together.

*If your child is being bullied, tell him or her to:*

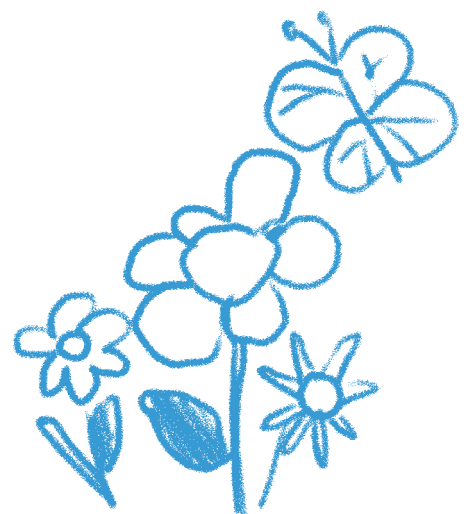
- Avoid being alone with a bully.
- Call for help. Ask an adult to help out.
- Take a stand. Try not to get angry or act afraid. Try using humor or being assertive when dealing with bullies.

Children are sometimes bullied because they are different in some way. They can be targets of a bully because of the colour of their skin, their name, their size, their intelligence, the way they walk — anything that makes them stand out. Help your children to understand that they are not the problem. The bully is the problem. No one should have to put up with being bullied.

*If your child is a bully, he or she needs to change. Help your child to:*

- Stop the behavior immediately.
- Take responsibility for his or her actions.
- Find new ways to act that don't hurt people.
- Find friends who do not bully or hurt others.

Children who bully others often have low self-esteem. Sometimes they have been bullied themselves. They need your help to deal with these problems.



## Violence and Abuse

As your child moves out into the bigger world of school, he or she will be meeting new people and dealing with new situations. At some point, you or your child may have to deal — directly or indirectly — with violence or abuse.

Child abuse is not limited to any one group of people. It can happen to any family — rich or poor, city or country, one parent or two.

Violence and abuse can take several forms. These include:

- **Physical Abuse** is any act that physically hurts or injures a child. This includes hitting, cutting, burning, kicking and pushing. Anything that hurts is physical abuse.
- **Neglect** is what happens when a child is not given the care needed for healthy physical, mental or social growth. It is neglect when a family doesn't give a child good food and clothing; a clean, safe place to live; good medical and health care; and good general care. It is also neglect when a family doesn't watch over a child and keep him or her safe.
- **Emotional Abuse** can take many different forms. Not showing love for a child; rejecting, criticizing, ignoring or frightening a child; and often speaking cruelly or angrily to a child are all forms of emotional abuse.
- **Sexual Abuse** happens when an adult or teenager uses a child for sexual purposes. It can include rape, incest, touching or playing with a child's private parts, and having a child touch another person's private parts.

Children are also considered to be abused and in need of protection if they are in a home where they witness violence between others, for example their father abusing their mother.

### Parents should be aware of:

- **Shared responsibility.**  
Parents should realize that when a child starts school, the welfare of the child becomes a concern of the school as well as of the family. If the professionals who work with a child — teachers, counselors, principals, public health staff — have any reason to suspect that the child is being neglected or physically or sexually abused, they have a legal and moral obligation to report it to an agency.
- **Personal responsibility.**  
When they start school, children begin to bring new friends home to play. Parents who have reason to believe that one of their child's friends is being abused or neglected, have a legal obligation to report their concerns to the Department of Community Services or the Children's Aid Society.
- **Schoolyard violence.**  
Children may see violence in movies, on TV or at home and some of them act it out on the playground. Every child deserves a safe school environment and it's hard for anyone to feel safe if he or she is being bullied.





If you are concerned about violence in your child's school, or if you think your child is being bullied, talk to your child's teacher. Schools have policies to deal with violence. Some schools have a "zero tolerance" policy that specifies certain kinds of discipline for any form of violence or hitting. Many schools are introducing "violence-free school" programs or conflict resolution programs to teach kids skills for dealing with disputes without violence. Your child needs to understand what is considered to be "violent" at his or her school.

### **Street Proofing and Personal Safety**

Most parents tell their children "be careful of strangers" and "don't go anywhere with someone you don't know." But did you know that more than 8 out of 10 abusers are people the child knows?

To help keep your children safe, you need some rules that apply to everyone, even people your children know. You need to help your children practice using these rules and to be sure they understand why they are important.

#### **As a parent:**

- Check your babysitter's references. If your children go to the sitter's home, be sure you check out any other teens or adults who will be there when children are present.
- Get to know the adults and teens who work with your children. This includes adults and teens your children know at school, church, sports and clubs.
- Use the proper names of body parts (for example, penis, vagina, breasts). Your children need to hear these words used and be comfortable using them.

- **Teach your children the difference between "good touches" and "bad touches."** Most touching is positive and healthy. The cuddles, hugs and kisses you share with your children are "good touches" — you and your children feel loved, comforted, close and safe. Sharing lots of good touches will help your children recognize bad touches if they ever encounter them.

Give examples of bad touches, like:

- "No one should touch your private parts."
- "It's wrong for someone to ask you to touch his penis."
- "Asking you to take your clothes off counts as a bad touch."
- "Anytime hugging, kissing or tickling makes you feel funny, it's a bad touch."

Bad touching does not feel good or safe. Tell your children to listen to their feelings. No child has to put up with anything that feels wrong or uncomfortable.

- **Be sure your children know it's OK to say "No, don't touch me!" or "Stop that!"** It takes a lot of self-confidence for children to be able to say this to an adult or a teenager. All children need to know that they have the right to say "NO" if someone touches them or asks them to do something that makes them uncomfortable. They need to know that this is not rude.

You need to respect your children's right to say "No", too. Children should not be forced into kissing, tickling, squeezing or spending private time with adults they don't want to be with.

- **Let your children know that they can trust you and talk to you.** Children need to know that they must tell a parent if anyone — even someone they love — threatens them or touches them in a way that doesn't feel right. Tell your child that it is wrong for an adult or a teenager to ask them to keep things they do together secret.

When your children talk to you, listen to and respect what they say. For example, if a child says, "I don't like my music teacher any more," ask "Why not?"

#### As a family:

- Use a secret family code. This is a special word or phrase that will tell your child it's safe to go with an adult or teenager. Your child should NEVER go with anyone, even close family friends, unless the friend can give the child the secret code. Once the code has been used, it should be changed.
- Make some family rules.
  - Walk in pairs or a group, not alone.
  - Walk home from school the same way every day, unless their regular route is blocked (by construction, for example). Your child must tell you if he or she is coming home a different way.
  - Do not go into public washrooms alone.
  - You will be on time to pick up your child. If you are going to be late for a pick-up, you and your child should agree in advance on a safe place for the child to wait. For example, a well-lit store, inside the arena or inside the school are safe places.
- Learn about sexual abuse prevention as a family. Read a book or watch a video together. Talk about it with your child. A good video is "Feeling Yes, Feeling No," which may be available from your local library.

#### What should you do if your child tells you he or she has been approached or assaulted?

Try not to panic. Don't let your anger show — your child could easily think that you are angry at him or her. Tell your child, "I'm so glad you told me about this."

- **Listen to your child.** Take it slowly. Ask for details but let him or her tell you what happened in his or her own words. Use drawings or dolls if this is easier for your child, but don't suggest other words or change what's being said. Your ideas might confuse the child and blur the truth.
- **Believe your child.** Children seldom lie about sexual abuse. Tell your child that you believe him or her. Tell your child that you are glad he or she told you what happened.
- **Do not blame your child.** Say, "This is not your fault." Do not let your child think for one minute that he or she is to blame for what happened or is in any way at fault.
- **Support your child.** Recognize and accept **your** child's feelings, whether they are anger, fear, sadness or anxiety. Let **your** child know that you will protect him or her from further abuse.
- **Get help.** The law says that you must call the police or child protection officials at once if you have reason to believe that your child, or any child, has been abused. You may also want to think about getting counselling to help your child through the healing process.

# Healthy Eating

## School Food Policies

Teaching children that they should eat healthy snacks and then selling cookies, chips and candy in the school canteen sends confusing messages.

Check to see if your school has a **Healthy Food Policy**. These policies try to ensure that the foods served or sold in school vending machines, canteens, cafeterias and for fund-raising:

- Are healthy and nourishing
- Support the guidelines for healthy eating that children are learning in their health classes

Find out what foods are available at your child's school. There should be:

- A wide variety of foods from all four food groups
- A wide selection of vegetables and fruits
- An emphasis on whole grain products
- A variety of healthy snacks
- A selection of lower-fat foods

Eating healthy foods before and during the school day gives children the energy and nutrients they need to learn, grow and play. You can support your school's efforts to give children healthy food choices by making sure that the foods you send to school for lunches, snacks and class parties include choices from Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating.

## School Policies on Food Allergies

Some children have life-threatening allergies to peanuts or other foods.

Find out if your child's school has a policy to protect children with allergies. For example, some policies state that children cannot bring certain foods — like peanut

butter — to school or carry them on the bus.

If your school has a policy like this, your child can continue to enjoy peanuts, peanut butter and other foods that contain nuts at home.

You can get ideas for lunches and snacks that don't violate your school's food policy from your local Public Health Office.

## Breakfast of Champions

Breakfast is important for everyone but it is critical for growing children. Without a good breakfast, children may be tired, cranky and have trouble concentrating. This makes it difficult for them to learn. Children who eat breakfast feel better and do better in school.

Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating has four food groups:

- Grain Products
- Vegetables and Fruit
- Milk Products
- Meat and Alternatives

You'll find a copy of the Food Guide on pages 16 and 17. A healthy breakfast has foods from three of these four food groups. For example, a bagel (Grain Products), an orange (Vegetables and Fruit) and a glass of milk (Milk Products) make a healthy breakfast and will get kids off to a good start.

Foods like cake, donuts, toaster pastries and sugary fruit drinks don't give kids the nourishment they need to start their day. These kinds of food are okay once in a while, but shouldn't replace healthy breakfast foods from the four food groups.

Breakfast doesn't have to be fancy or traditional. Try leftovers, cheese and crackers or a sandwich. If you're short of time in the morning, get breakfast ready the night before. You can also pack extra food with their lunch so your children can eat breakfast on the way to school or after they get there.

## Breakfast Ideas

### *Yogurt Shake*

In a blender mix fruit, yogurt, milk and all-bran cereal.

### *Cheese Boats*

Spread cheese on celery sticks. Serve with toast, crackers or a muffin.

### *Jiffy Pizza*

Top half a whole-wheat bun or English muffin with tomato sauce and mozzarella cheese.

Bake or microwave.

### *Happy Face Cereal*

Top hot cereal with slices of bananas, apples or dried fruit to make a happy face.

Serve with milk or yogurt.

### *Apple Treasures*

Core an apple, stuff with peanut butter,\* and top with raisins.

### *Nutty Bananas*

Dip a banana in yogurt and roll in wheat germ, crushed nuts,\* or dry whole grain cereal.

Enjoy with a glass of milk.

### *Breakfast Trail Mix*

Mix together different dry whole grain cereals, (e.g. cheerios, shreddies, bite-size shredded wheat) pretzels, and nuts,\* in a plastic bag. A juice box makes it a complete breakfast to go.

### *Toasted Cheese Treat*

A toasted cheese and tomato sandwich can provide a tasty morning alternative.

### *Sandwiches*

Try egg salad, cheese, peanut butter, tuna or salmon. Use different kinds of grain products, like bread, rolls or wraps.

## Healthy Lunches

Lunches for school can taste good, be easy to pack and eat and still be healthy. Variety and imagination are the keys:

- Choose a variety of foods from the four food groups.
- Make sandwiches with different kinds of grain products, like bagels, pitas, flour tortillas and rolls.
- Make sandwiches more interesting with nutritious extras like raisins, grated carrot, red or green pepper, apple slices, lettuce, cucumber, tomato or onion.

## Healthy Lunch Ideas

### *Pizza Lunch*

Left-over pizza

Pear

Milk

### *"Enviro" Cracker Pack Lunch*

Skip the pre-packed and make your own:

Variety of crackers

Slices of cheese, lean meats, boiled egg

Sliced cucumber and peppers

Yogurt and fruit

### *Munch on the Move*

Favorite whole grain muffin

Peanut or other nut butter\*

Cheese chunk or yogurt

Fruit cup

Milk

*\*Some children have life-threatening allergies to peanuts or other foods. Find out if your child's school has a policy to protect children with allergies.*

### *Wrap ‘n Roll*

Tortilla wrap with ham, cheese,  
and lettuce  
Banana  
Orange Juice

### *Bagel Sandwich Lunch*

Bagel sandwich with tuna salad  
Carrot and celery sticks  
Milk

### *Mexican Fiesta*

Bean and vegetable burrito  
Milk  
Orange

## **Snacks That Count**

Pack a snack for recess! Active, growing children need healthy snacks to keep them going throughout the day.

Healthy snacks have foods from one or two food groups and are “dental friendly” — that is, they don’t leave sticky sugar on children’s teeth.

All foods can be part of healthy eating, but some make better snacks than others. Foods that have a lot of fat and sugar tend to have little nourishment. These are “sometimes” foods, not “everyday” foods. Sweet sticky foods increase the risk of cavities and shouldn’t be eaten as snacks at school. Save them for special occasions at home where children can brush their teeth after eating them.

Snacks can be good for the environment as well as good for children. You can pack snacks in reusable plastic containers, wrap them in waxed paper that can go in the compost bin, or send snacks that don’t need to be wrapped at all, like fresh fruit.

### **Foods for Healthy Snacking**

#### *Grain Products*

whole grain bread  
crackers  
cereal  
muffin  
oatmeal cookies  
pita bread  
bagel

#### *Vegetables & Fruit*

raw fruit  
canned fruit  
raw vegetables  
fruit juice  
vegetable juice

#### *Milk Products*

milk  
yogurt  
hard cheese  
cottage cheese  
pudding

#### *Meat & Alternatives*

lean meat slices  
sunflower seeds  
hard-boiled eggs  
peanuts or peanut  
butter\*  
hummus  
baked beans

#### *Try a Great Snack Combination*

- Crackers and cheese
- Peanut butter\* on a bagel
- Half of a sandwich
- Muffin and fruit
- Milk and oatmeal cookies
- Fruit and yogurt
- Crackers, vegetables, and dip
- Pizza

#### *Snacks to Eat Less Often*

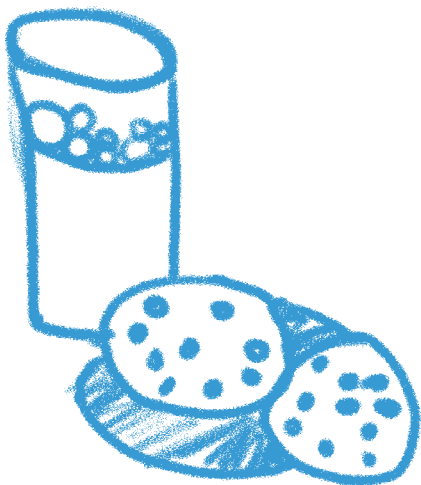
- chocolate bars
- suckers, candy, marshmallows
- donuts, sweet rolls
- pies, cakes, brownies
- fruit roll-ups
- sugar-coated cereal
- sweetened fruit drinks, pop
- potato chips, nacho chips
- dry soup mixes

*\*Some children have life-threatening allergies to peanuts or other foods. Find out if your child’s school has a policy to protect children with allergies.*

## Keeping Foods Safe at School

To keep lunches and snacks fresh and healthy:

- Store lunches and snacks in the fridge until the kids are ready to leave for the day.
- Pack foods that need to be kept cold in an insulated lunch bag. Include an ice pack or frozen juice box.
- Don't depend on a thermos to keep hot foods hot. A thermos may not be able to keep the food hot enough to prevent food poisoning. If you send foods like soup, spaghetti or casserole to school, keep them cold. In some schools children can reheat these kinds of foods.
- Wash lunch bags and boxes, plastic containers and all utensils every day. Used plastic, waxed paper or foil wrappings may carry bacteria and shouldn't be reused.



## Drinks

Healthy, active children often get thirsty and need to drink throughout the day.

*Water:* Choose water to quench thirst. Water is the least expensive and most convenient drink of all. Water can be frozen in a plastic bottle and used to keep lunches cold.

*Milk:* Milk is a great source of calcium, a mineral children need to grow strong bones and teeth. Participating in a School Milk Program is a good way to be sure your child gets milk during the school day.

*Unsweetened fruit or vegetable juices:* Check the package label to be sure you are getting 100% fruit or vegetable juice. Even if fruit drinks have added nutrients, they are not as nourishing as 100% fruit juice.

There are many different kinds of 100% juices:

- orange
- apple
- tomato
- pineapple
- vegetable blends
- grapefruit
- cranberry juice
- grape (either white or purple)

CANADA'S  
**Food  
Guide**  
TO HEALTHY EATING



**Grain Products**  
Choose whole grain and enriched products more often.

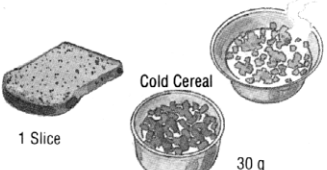
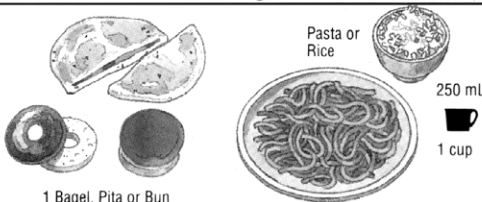
**Vegetables & Fruit**  
Choose dark green and orange vegetables and orange fruit more often.

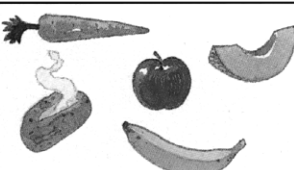
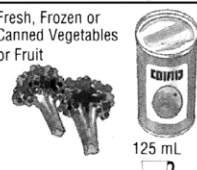

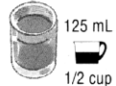
**Milk Products**  
Choose lower-fat milk products more often.




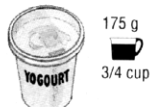
**Meat & Alternatives**  
Choose leaner meats, poultry and fish, as well as dried peas, beans and lentils more often.

CANADA'S  
**Food Guide**  
 TO HEALTHY EATING  
 FOR PEOPLE FOUR YEARS AND OVER

**Different People Need Different Amounts of Food**  
 The amount of food you need every day from the 4 food groups and other foods depends on your age, body size, activity level, whether you are male or female and if you are pregnant or breast-feeding. That's why the Food Guide gives a lower and higher number of servings for each food group. For example, young children can choose the lower number of servings, while male teenagers can go to the higher number. Most other people can choose servings somewhere in between.

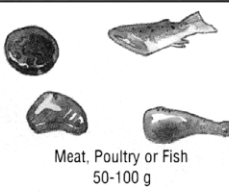





<b>Grain Products</b> <b>5-12</b> SERVINGS PER DAY	<b>1 Serving</b> 	<b>2 Servings</b> 
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<b>Vegetables &amp; Fruit</b> <b>5-10</b> SERVINGS PER DAY	<b>1 Serving</b> 			
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<b>Milk Products</b> SERVINGS PER DAY Children 4-9 years: 2-3 Youth 10-16 years: 3-4 Adults: 2-4 Pregnant & Breast-feeding Women: 3-4	<b>1 Serving</b> 			
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**Other Foods**

Taste and enjoyment can also come from other foods and beverages that are not part of the 4 food groups. Some of these foods are higher in fat or Calories, so use these foods in moderation.

<b>Meat &amp; Alternatives</b> <b>2-3</b> SERVINGS PER DAY	<b>1 Serving</b> 					
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Enjoy eating well, being active and feeling good about yourself. That's





# Keeping Kids Healthy During the Elementary Years

## Ages and Stages

The years when children are starting school are a time of growth and change. Before your eyes, children get bigger and stronger. They're able to do new things and begin to find new ways to get along with others. Going to school will help your child develop, but your role is still important.

Between the ages of 4 and 7, your child is developing physically, mentally and socially:

### Physical Development Skills

- Bouncing a ball, walking backwards, skipping, hopping, marching and learning to ride a bike
- Using a knife and fork and learning to eat neatly and politely
- Learning to tie shoes, to print and write and develop more skill at drawing

### Mental Development Processes

- Asking a lot of questions — how? what? why? Be patient and try to answer them.
- Talking and learning lots of new words to express ideas
- Acting and telling stories. Beginning to be much clearer about what's real and what's make-believe.
- Learning to count, to read, and to try to solve problems

### Social Development Milestones

- Understanding and following rules
- Wanting to please, to help you and to take on responsibility. Wanting to be treated like big kids. Taking pride in what they are able to do.

- Needing attention and support. Some kids this age would rather talk than eat. They need to know someone cares enough to listen.
- Playing more complicated games and playing more and more with other kids. Keep an eye on the amount of time your children spend watching TV or videos. Make sure they have the chance to do many different things and to play with other kids.

These are interesting and exciting years for children and for parents! You and your school can do a lot to help your child develop physically, mentally and socially.

## Self-Esteem

“Self-esteem” is the term that describes how people feel about themselves.

When children feel good about themselves, they have the confidence to try new things, to make new friends, and to respect others. Feeling good about themselves helps children to do well and to make good choices in their lives.

Every child is one of a kind. Every child has strengths and weaknesses, things they're good at and things they don't like to do. In order to grow up to be strong and healthy adults, children need to like themselves and to see themselves as worthwhile people. In other words, they need to have good self-esteem.

Parents have a big part to play in helping their children build self-esteem. You are the most important people in your children's lives. Your opinion matters more than anyone else's. All children need to know that their parents love and accept them as they are.

To help your kids feel good about themselves:

- **Let them know you love them.**
  - Say “I love you.”
  - Hug them, kiss them, pat them on the shoulder.
  - Smile when you see them coming.
- **Praise them.**
  - When they do something right, tell them. Don't wait until they do something wrong and then criticize.
  - Praise them for trying, even if they don't succeed. Effort counts, too.
  - Focus on the things your child does well, not on the things he or she isn't as good at. Don't compare your children. Each is special in their own way.
- **Give them jobs to do.**
  - Children feel good when they know you depend on them.
  - Praise them when they do their job well. If they don't do their job, tell them you are disappointed. Give them a chance to do it right.
- **Respect them**
  - Listen when they talk to you. Let them know you think their ideas matter.
  - Ask them what they think.
  - Respect their feelings. Don't make fun of them, pick on them, or belittle them.

Children who are loved and respected learn to love and respect themselves. They grow up to be people who love and respect others.

## Body Image

How children feel about their body has a big effect on how they feel about themselves.

Children first see themselves through the eyes of the people they care about — their parents, caregivers, family members and friends. They develop good or bad feelings about their body based on the way others react to the way they look.

Parents play an important part in helping children develop a healthy body image.

- **Accept your children's appearance and teach them that we all come in different shapes and sizes.** Focus and comment on your children's many good qualities rather than on how they look. For example, praise qualities like their sense of humour, their kindness, how well they share with others and how much you enjoy their company.
- **Help your children to discover what their body can do and what they enjoy doing.** Explore a variety of activities like running, jumping, throwing, dancing, singing, playing music, drawing, and doing crafts. Try not to limit your children's activities based on gender. It's okay for girls to be interested in things like karate or for boys to be interested in dance.

Encourage an active family lifestyle by limiting the amount of time kids spend watching TV and playing video games. Give children the opportunity to swim, play, ride bikes and walk. Be active along with them.

Post photos of your children being active and having fun on the fridge or in another visible spot. This will let your kids know that you're proud of them and remind them of activities they enjoy.

- **Do not accept unkind remarks about your child's — or anyone else's — appearance.** Being teased can make anyone feel bad about their body. If you find out that someone is making unkind comments about your child's appearance, address it directly or through your child's teacher.

If you find that your child is saying mean things to another child, don't let it go. Take the opportunity to talk about how bad people feel when they get teased. Set a consequence for mean teasing to show your child that you will not accept it.

Be aware of the way that you feel and speak about your own body. Learning to accept and feel good about your own body will set a good example for your children.

- **Let your kids have a say in choosing their clothes and hairstyle.** This will allow them to feel that they have some control over their own body. Help them choose clothing that is comfortable, fits well and allows them to move freely, have fun and enjoy all the things their body can do.

Talk with a doctor, nutritionist, public health nurse or nurse practitioner if you have concerns about a child's weight, growth or body image.

## Stress

As parents, most of us have some stress in our lives. We feel the pressures of raising children, of too little money, of too much to do, too little time and not enough help.

Children have stress in their lives, too. Starting school is exciting, but it's also stressful. It takes a while to get used to new people, new rules and new routines.

As adults, we need to learn ways to handle the stress in our own lives. We need to find ways to relax, to slow down, to figure out what's causing our stress and find a way to

deal with it. We need to learn to talk about what's bothering us and not bottle up our feelings.

We need to teach our children to do these things, too. Helping your children learn to manage stress will give them skills they can use all their lives.

### What are the signs of stress?

In children, the signs of stress can be physical or behavioural. Nearly all children have some of these signs from time to time. Check with a doctor to be sure there is no physical cause for them. If your child is in good health and the symptoms don't go away, stress may be the cause.

#### Physical signs of stress:

- Headaches, stomach aches
- Trembling, nervous tics and twitches
- Teeth grinding (You may not see the grinding, but your child may complain of a sore jaw.)
- Becoming more clumsy or accident-prone
- Having to urinate often or wetting the bed

#### Behavioural signs of stress:

- Crankiness, laziness (Just doesn't feel like doing anything.)
- Anxiety, nervousness
- Poor eating habits
- Watches TV all the time and doesn't want to do anything else
- Has trouble sleeping or has nightmares

### How can I help my children learn to handle stress?

The best way to help children deal with stress is to listen to them, love them and respect them. When children have a warm, loving family to come home to, they find it much easier to handle life's ups and downs.

#### When your child is feeling stressed:

- **Find out what's causing the stress.** Talk with your child. Find out why your child is upset. Listen to what he or she has to say.

*For example:*

- “Tommy never wants to play with me anymore.”
- “I’m bad at sports.”

- **Help pinpoint the problem.**

When you talk it through, it may turn out that your child is making a small problem into a big crisis. Children can need help to keep things in perspective.

*For example:*

- Tommy has started taking music lessons after school on Tuesdays. Tommy and your child used to play on Tuesdays. Help your child see that the problem isn’t that Tommy never wants to play, but that he can’t play at that particular time anymore.
- Your child didn’t get picked to play basketball on the school team. Help her see that this doesn’t mean she’s bad at all sports or even that she’s bad at basketball. The problem is that lots of kids try out but only a few get picked.

- **Help your child think about what to do.**

Once you’ve sorted out the problem together, help your child find a way to handle it.

*For example:*

- If Tommy can’t play on Tuesday afternoon anymore, maybe he could come to play on Wednesday, or come home for lunch with your child once in a while.
- If your child can’t play on the school team, maybe there’s another basketball team she can play on. Or maybe she’d like to try another kind of team. Or take lessons in another sport, like swimming or karate. Or maybe she’d like to do something completely different. Every child is good at something. Help your child find his or her special skills.

If you feel that your child needs more help in handling stress than you are able to give, talk with your doctor or contact the local mental health clinic.

## Being Active

Many children do not get as much physical activity as they need to grow and be healthy. On average, Canadian children spend 26 hours a week watching TV and another 30 hours in school. This doesn’t count the time many children spend playing video games.

Being active helps kids in many ways.

Regular physical activity:

- Increases self-esteem
- Helps kids feel better physically and mentally
- Helps children become more skillful at sports and physical activities
- Gives kids positive things to do in their spare time and keeps them from being bored

By encouraging children to be active, parents can start a pattern that continues throughout their children’s lives.

### To help your children be active:

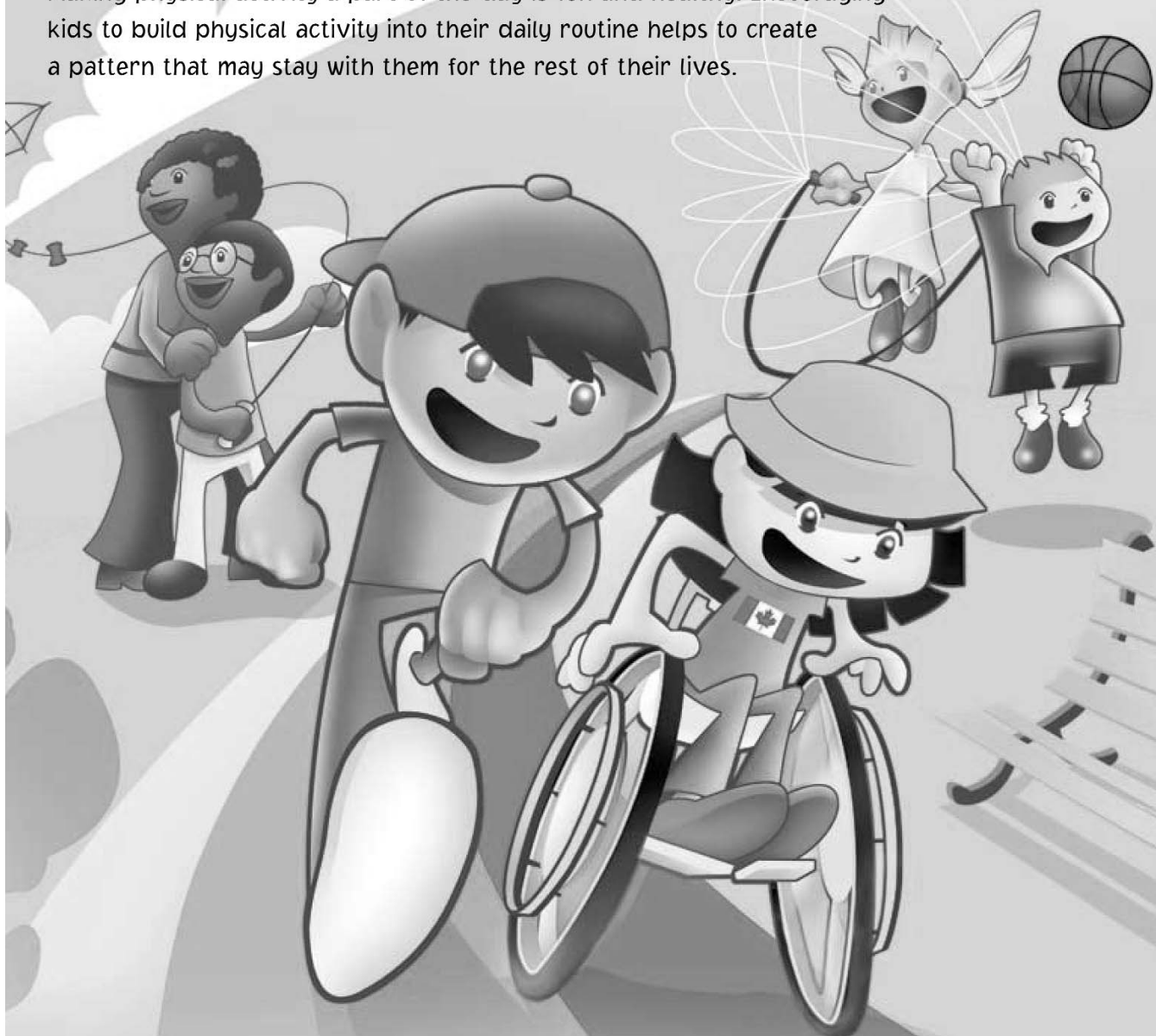
- Encourage your child to be active on a regular basis.
- Set a good example by being physically active yourself.
- Limit the amount of time children spend watching television and playing video or computer games.
- Plan family activities around physical activity.
  - Walk or bicycle together instead of driving
  - Make active chores like vacuuming and mowing the lawn fun by doing them together
  - Give your child time and opportunities to play outside
  - Include fun physical activities and games in family events such as birthday parties, picnics, and vacations
- Make it easy for children to participate in school and community physical activity and sports programs
- Work in your community to improve the quality and availability of school and community physical activity programs

# Canada's **PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDE FOR CHILDREN**

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS FUN!

- At home • At school • At play • Inside or outside
- On the way to and from school • With family and friends

Making physical activity a part of the day is fun and healthy. Encouraging kids to build physical activity into their daily routine helps to create a pattern that may stay with them for the rest of their lives.



Health  
Canada

Santé  
Canada



The College of  
Family Physicians  
of Canada



Canadian Society for  
Exercise Physiology

# CALL TO ACTION

for parents, educators, physicians and community leaders



## Canada's Guidelines for INCREASING Physical Activity in Children

This Guide will help children:

- **INCREASE** time **CURRENTLY** spent on physical activity, starting with 30 minutes **MORE** per day  
(See CHART BELOW)
- **REDUCE** “non active” time spent on TV, video, computer games and surfing the Internet, starting with 30 minutes **LESS** per day  
(See CHART BELOW)

**Build up physical activity throughout the day in periods of at least 5 to 10 minutes**

	Daily <b>INCREASE</b> in moderate* physical activity (Minutes)		Daily <b>INCREASE</b> in vigorous** physical activity (Minutes)		Total Daily <b>INCREASE</b> in physical activity (Minutes)	Daily <b>DECREASE</b> in non-active time (Minutes)
Month 1	at least 20	+	10	=	30	30
Month 2	at least 30	+	15	=	45	45
Month 3	at least 40	+	20	=	60	60
Month 4	at least 50	+	25	=	75	75
Month 5	at least 60	+	30	=	90	90

\* Moderate physical activity examples  
 • brisk walking • swimming  
 • skating • playing outdoors  
 • bike riding

\*\* Vigorous physical activity examples  
 • running • soccer

**Congratulations! Daily active time is part of a healthy lifestyle.**



## Endurance Flexibility Strength

### All contribute to a healthy body

Combine 3 types of physical activity for best results:

- 1. Endurance** activities that strengthen the heart and lungs such as running, jumping and swimming.
- 2. Flexibility** activities that encourage children to bend, stretch and reach such as gymnastics and dancing.
- 3. Strength** building activities that build strong muscles and bones such as climbing or swinging across the playground ladder.



### The Benefits of Regular Activity

- ☞ Builds strong bones and strengthens muscles
- ☞ Maintains flexibility
- ☞ Achieves a healthy weight
- ☞ Promotes good posture and balance
- ☞ Improves fitness
- ☞ Meet new friends
- ☞ Strengthens the heart
- ☞ Improves physical self-esteem
- ☞ Increases relaxation
- ☞ Enhances healthy growth and development

## Here are some activities to try with children

- ☞ Take stairs instead of elevators
- ☞ Take a walk after supper – and make the walk an adventure
- ☞ Play ball or ball hockey or soccer or go swimming
- ☞ Ride a bike or scooter
- ☞ Rake the leaves, shovel snow or carry groceries together
- ☞ Toboggan or ski or build a ‘snowman’
- ☞ Organize neighborhood games to help kids make active choices
- ☞ Dance, dance, dance
- ☞ Play sports of any kind
- ☞ Bring the kids outdoors to play
- ☞ Work with the neighbours to create a walking ‘school bus’
- ☞ Leave the car at home when going on short trips



**Healthy activity is safe activity**

### For more information:

Call 1 888 334-9769 or visit the web-site at [www.healthcanada.ca/paguide](http://www.healthcanada.ca/paguide). Please use this Guide with additional support resources.

### Active bodies need energy.

Follow *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* to make wise food choices



[www.healthcanada.ca/foodguide](http://www.healthcanada.ca/foodguide)



Canada



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## Discipline

Discipline is not just another word for punishment. Discipline means teaching children to behave. It means helping them to learn what you expect them to do and how you expect them to act.

There's a lot you can do to help your children learn to behave.

### Make rules and stick to them.

- **Make as few rules as possible and repeat them often. Be sure your children understand what the rules are and what they mean.**

*For example:*

"You are allowed to ride your bike but only if you wear your helmet and it is buckled properly. It is not safe to ride your bike without wearing a helmet that is properly buckled."

- **Tell your children what will happen if they break the rules.**

*For example:*

"If you ride your bike without wearing your helmet and buckling it properly, you won't be able to ride your bike for a week."

- **Follow through. Let your children live with the results if they break the rules.**

*For example:*

"You know the rule. You rode your bike without your helmet buckled properly so you can't ride your bike for a week. We'll try again next week."

Praise them when they follow the rules or do what they're supposed to do.

- **Don't wait until they break a rule to notice them.**

*For example:*

"I was watching you ride your bike today. You're getting better at it all the time. And your helmet was buckled properly. Nice going!"

### Set a good example.

- **Children learn almost everything by watching what other people do.** This means that they can learn from your bad example just as well as from your good example.

*For example:*

- If you want your kids to be polite to others, let them see you saying "Please" and "Thank you."
- If you want your kids to be kind and to share with others, let them see you being kind and sharing.

### What can I do if they don't behave?

When children misbehave, you can try:

- Taking away a treat or a privilege
- Sending them to their room or a quiet place for a short time
- Explaining what you didn't like about their behaviour

One thing you should NOT do when children misbehave is spank them. Spanking does not teach good behaviour. It teaches children to be afraid of and dislike the person who hits them.



When you talk with your children about their misbehaviour, make sure they understand that while you're not happy about what they did (or didn't) do, you will always love them.

*For example:*

- Say: *"I asked you to take out the trash. I'm disappointed that you haven't done it. Please take it out now."*
- DON'T say: *"You didn't take out the trash. Are you too stupid to remember anything?"*

Remember, nobody's perfect. No parent does everything right all the time. All parents have times when they do or say something they're sorry for. We all make mistakes, and we can all learn from our mistakes.

When you do or say something you wish you hadn't, apologize to your child.

*For example:*

- Say: *"I'm sorry I yelled at you. Let's try again."*

Your children always deserve another chance and so do you.

## Talking to Your Kids About Sexuality

Sexuality is about understanding your "boyiness" or "girliness." As parents, you are the first and most important educators your children have. Like most parents, you probably know this, and like most parents you might feel a bit nervous about it. But you can do it! Parents are the best possible people to help their children grow up to become loving, caring, sexually healthy adults.

Children are curious about their bodies and about the differences between boys and girls. This leads to sex play, where children compare their bodies — sometimes with kids of the same sex, sometimes with kids of the opposite sex. This is a normal thing for

young children to do, especially between ages 3 and 8.

It's also normal for children to explore their bodies by touching themselves. Don't overreact and make children feel guilty or ashamed of their body. Explain that it's okay to touch yourself in private, but not in public.

Talk to your kids about sexuality and listen when they talk to you.

- **Get the facts.** You need to have accurate information to pass along to your children. Children need to know the correct names for all their body parts: "penis," "vagina" and "anus" as well as "eyes," "nose" and "elbow." They need to know how their body works. As children get older, they will hear many slang and swear words for body parts and sexual acts. Keep reminding them that it is always okay to use the correct names, but slang and swear words are not acceptable.

Children also need to learn the more grown-up ways to talk about bodily functions. For example, to say "I need to go to the washroom," instead of "I need to make pee pee."



Give your children the facts from the start. When they ask where babies come from, don't say, "The stork brings them." Say, "Babies grow in a special place inside their mother's body." In the long run, it's easier to tell kids the truth than to help them "unlearn" the fairy tales we sometimes tell when a question catches us off guard.

Don't be afraid to give your children the information they ask for and need. Knowledge will not cause problems. Lack of information or understanding may. Teaching children about sexuality will help them to make healthy choices.

- **Your values are important.** You need to know the facts about sexuality, but you also need to be clear about what you, personally, think and believe about sexuality.

Children learn their family's basic values very early in life. You teach your children by what you do and what you say. From your first loving touches at birth, you are showing your attitude toward the human body. When you answer your children's questions about sex, you are passing on your values and attitudes along with the information. It's also important to teach your children to accept people who have different values.

As children learn to read, become more independent and spend more time away from home, parents have less control over what they see and hear. Children will begin to pick up new ideas and values that may not be the same as yours.

Keep talking to your children and keep listening to what they say. If you are worried about what your children are learning, tell them so. Your children will think about what you say.

- **Communication is important, too.** When children ask questions, the best approach is to answer clearly and honestly, but not to go overboard and tell the child more than he or she wants to know. If children want to know more, they'll ask more questions.

Remember too, to consider the child's age when answering questions. An explanation that satisfies a 4 year old will not be enough for a 9 year old.

When answering questions:

- **Be sure you understand what your child really wants to know.**

Child: *"Where do babies come from?"*

Parent: *"Do you mean where do they grow?"*

- **Find out what the child already knows.**  
*"Where do you think babies come from?"*

- **Clear up any misinformation.**

Child: *"They grow in the mommy's belly."*

Parent: *"They grow in a special place inside the Mother called a uterus."*

- **Keep it simple.**

For example:

*"Why are those dogs stuck together?"*

*"Those dogs are mating."*

*"How come I don't have hair down there?"*

*"You'll get hair when you're older."*

*"How does the baby breathe inside the mommy?"*

*"The mommy breathes for the baby and for herself."*

You can get more information about talking to your kids about sexuality from your local Public Health Services Office. If you have questions, you can ask for the booklet *"Talk Sex"* or you can talk with a public health nurse. The addresses of these offices are listed in the back of this booklet.

## Safety

Starting school makes your child's world more exciting and much bigger. Starting school also makes safety a much bigger issue because there is greater chance of your child having an accident.

Safety is everyone's concern. As a parent, you need to be aware of safety risks so that you can teach your child safety rules. You also need to set a good example by following safety rules yourself. For example, if you drive onto the school grounds, or even near the school grounds, you need to be extra careful.

It's a good idea for parents to take a basic first aid course. There are also first aid courses for children. Contact your local St. John Ambulance or Red Cross for information about what's available where you live.

### Booster Seats in Cars

#### *Purpose of a booster seat*

Booster seats are for children over 18 kg (40 lb.). A booster seat is not a substitute for a car seat for a child under 18 kg. New booster seats have an upper weight limit of 45.5 kg (100 lb.) to allow children up to 9 years of age to travel safely.

Boosters allow a child to safely use the adult seat belt by positioning it properly over the child's body. Until 9 or 10 years-of-age, a child's pelvis is underdeveloped, making it difficult to maintain correct lap belt positioning over the upper thighs. If the lap belt rides up onto a child's abdomen, there is a risk of serious internal injury or spinal damage in a crash. **Never allow the shoulder belt to be put under the arm or behind the back.**

A booster seat will also raise a child so that she can see out the window. This is, in fact, a safety issue — a happy child makes a better passenger, and is less likely to fuss and distract the driver.

When using a booster seat, it is important that your child has proper head and neck support. If the midpoint of your child's ears is above the vehicle seat back, he could be injured. If this is the case, use a high back booster designed to be taller than the vehicle seat (used only with a lap/shoulder belt).

#### *What is available?*

Booster seats come in three basic styles:

- 1) a hard plastic seat with two "arms", to keep the lap belt from sliding up on the abdomen in a collision. It is recommended that this style be used with a lap/shoulder belt, rather than a lap belt alone.
- 2) a hard plastic seat with padded bar or abdominal shield, fitted snugly against the child's abdomen. This style is designed to be used when there is only a lap belt available. The lap belt is positioned in a moulded recess on the front of the shield. For some models, the shield can be removed. Then, the shoulder strap is used for better protection.
- 3) a high back booster, either moulded plastic or covered, high density foam. High back boosters provide head support, which is important if the vehicle seat back is low. They must be used with a lap/shoulder belt and usually have a shoulder belt positioner, also called a comfort clip.

### *Which is safest?*

A booster that uses a lap/shoulder belt limits forward head movement in a crash and, therefore, offers better protection than one that uses only a lap belt.

A booster should be used until:

- the child has a sitting height of 74 cm (29 in.) [at least, 1.45 m (4 ft. 9 in.) tall],
- the child's knees bend comfortably over the edge of the seat when he is sitting back against the vehicle seat,
- the lap belt rests across the upper thighs,
- the shoulder belt is centred on the shoulder and chest, **and**
- the child can stay seated like this for the whole trip.

A child has outgrown the booster when he reaches the upper weight [27 to 45.5 kg (60 to 100 lb.), depending on the model], or upper height limit, or when the middle of his ears is above the back of the vehicle seat or high back booster.

### *Remember*

- Booster seats, like car seats, must be put in your vehicle correctly. It is important that you always follow the instructions for your booster seat and vehicle. Make sure that the seat belt is snug.
- Encourage your child to sit up straight. A child slumped over the side of a booster could be injured in a sudden stop or crash.
- Using pillows, cushions, blankets, etc. to boost a child in a vehicle is dangerous. In a collision, they will compress, creating slack in the seat belt. The seat belt could then ride up on the child's abdomen, or the child could fly out of the belt altogether.

- Add-on shoulder belt positioning devices which attach to both the lap and shoulder belt are not recommended for children or adults. There are no regulations governing the production or design of these products. They can change the geometry of the seat belt, pulling the lap belt up, onto the abdomen. Crash tests, done in the U.S., have shown that they increase the likelihood of injury or death in a crash. ITSA recommends that these devices not be used. (Shoulder belt height adjusters and comfort clips, available on some newer vehicles, are acceptable.)
- Remember to fasten in the booster, even when your child is not in it. During a sudden stop, an empty, unbelted booster seat could fly around the vehicle causing injury to the driver or passengers.

### **Bike Safety**

Make sure your children have a good strong bike, approved safety gear and know the rules for safe biking. Check with your local police or RCMP to find out about current standards and safety rules. Check with your school to find out their policy on riding bikes to school.

Kids should:

- Have a safe bicycle. Children's bikes should be the right size for them and should be checked often to make sure all parts are in good working order.
- Have safe gear. Children must wear a C.S.A. approved helmet and always wear footwear while biking. (Parents must wear a helmet, too!)
- Know safety rules. Make sure your children participate in bike rodeos to improve their skills. Go over safety rules with them to make sure they remember them.

- Ride in a safe place.  
Children age 9 and under should not be allowed to ride a bike alone on a street. Young children are safest riding on a playground. Children over age 9 should ride only on streets with little traffic.

### Playground Safety

As with bike safety, playground safety depends on having safe equipment and following the rules. Check the playground at your child's school and bring any problems to the school's attention.

#### Safe playground equipment

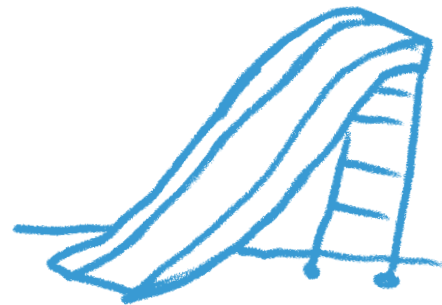
- Playground equipment should be firmly attached to the ground. It should be in good repair and should be checked regularly. If the equipment is rusty or broken, report this to whoever is in charge of the playground and find another place to play until the problem is solved.
- The ground around all playground equipment should be soft, not packed down and hard. Wood chips, pea gravel or sand make a good surface. There should never be concrete or asphalt around playground equipment.
- Playgrounds should be clean. This means no animal dirt, broken glass or garbage.

Teach your child safe playground rules

- Take turns
- No pushing or shoving
- On the swing:
  - one person per swing
  - sit in the middle of the seat
  - hold on with both hands
  - never walk near a moving swing
- On the slide:
  - move away from the bottom after your turn
  - climb up the ladder, not up the slide
- On the teeter-totter:
  - sit down and hold on. Don't stand
  - don't hop off without telling the person on the other side

### Skateboards and Rollerblades

Skateboards and rollerblades are best kept for at-home play. School — and the road to and from school — are not the safest places for them.



**Caution:** It is not safe for children to wear scarves and drawstrings on clothing on the playground. These can catch on playground equipment and strangle children. Children should also be told not to tie ropes to playground equipment.

## Poison Prevention

Did you know:

- In 2000 the Poison Control Centre received 11,500 calls. Of these, 8,300 involved actual poisonings.
- The average household has as many as 250 poisons. These include things like cleaners, pills, medicines, cosmetics, cigarettes, plants, paints, solvents and craft and art supplies.
- About 50% of the calls at the Poison Control Centre involve children under five years of age.
- Most childhood poisonings can be prevented.

### To poison-proof your home:

- **Learn to identify poisons in your home.**  
Learn to recognize the symbols for poisons, explosives and corrosive or flammable products. Teach your children to recognize these symbols, too. Check with a greenhouse or plant nursery to find out if any of the plants in or around your home are poisonous.
- **Keep poisons out of reach of children.**  
Keep poisons locked away where children can't reach them. This may require a lot of thought. You need to try to think like a child, and be several steps ahead. For example, children find poisons in purses, coat pockets, glove compartments, in medicine cabinets, in the garage, in the basement or under the kitchen sink. They taste cleaners, chew on art supplies and eat plants. They try to spray on perfume and get it in their eyes.

In an emergency call Poison Control: 428-8161 or 1-800-565-8161.

## Protect Your Children From Second Hand Smoke

It's important for your children's health that you protect them from second hand smoke.

Many children have no choice but to breathe second-hand smoke at home, in cars or in public places. This is even more dangerous for children than for adults because children are more sensitive to the poisons in second hand smoke. They also breathe faster than adults. This means that children take in more air and more of the poisons in the second hand smoke.

You may not realize just how bad second smoke is for children.

- Besides nicotine, cigarette smoke contains other poisonous and cancer-causing chemicals, including cyanide, ammonia, lead and tar. Two-thirds of the smoke from a cigarette is NOT inhaled by the smoker. This "sidestream" smoke from the burning end of the cigarette is the most dangerous part.
- Children who are exposed to second hand smoke are more likely to suffer from asthma, allergies and middle ear infections. They are also more likely to get other lung diseases and health problems, including cancer and heart disease.

The best way to protect your children from second hand smoke is to make your home smoke free. Even if you smoke, you can decide not to smoke in your home or car, and to avoid smoking around your children.

All children deserve to be protected from tobacco smoke!

Find out whether your child's school is smoke free.

## Preventing Smoking

Did you know:

- Every year, 1,600 Nova Scotians die from the effects of smoking.
- Nicotine is so addictive that 8 out of 10 people who try smoking get hooked.
- Half of all children try smoking before they are 12.

Taking steps now to prevent your children from ever starting to smoke, is one of the healthiest things you can do for them.

What you say and do about smoking can encourage and support your children's decision to be smoke-free.

### To keep your children from smoking:

- **Be a non-smoker yourself.** Your example is your children's most powerful teacher. If you smoke, quit now. You can find out about "stop smoking" programs from your doctor or local Public Health Services Office.
- **Be honest with your children about the risks smokers take.** If you smoke, talk with your children about how hard it is to stop smoking. If you've tried to stop in the past, and failed, tell them how difficult it was for you.
- **Help your children to say "no" to smoking.** Talk with them about the advertising they'll see and the pressure they might get from friends to try smoking. Help them learn ways to say "No."

- **Respect anti-smoking laws.** Your attitude towards smoking affects your children's attitude. If you respect rules about not smoking in hospitals, schools, workplaces and other public spaces, your children will learn to respect these laws (and other laws, too). It's also important that you respect, and teach your children to respect, the laws that make it illegal to sell tobacco products to people under 19.
- **Support efforts by your children's school to prevent smoking.** Many schools have programs to help kids keep from smoking. The risks of smoking are also covered in health education classes. Many schools are using the Nova Scotia Department of Health's "Smoke-Free for Life" Curriculum Supplement for grades primary to nine. Some District Public Health Services also offer schools the "Kids Against Tobacco Smoke" Program (KATS). In the KATS program, children in grades 5 and 6 learn strategies to encourage their fellow students not to smoke. Check to see if your children's school offers this program.





## Sun Protection

Preventing sunburn in childhood can make it much less likely that children will develop skin cancer later in life.

If your child is taking medication, check with your doctor or pharmacist before allowing him or her to go out in the sun. Some kinds of medication can make children very sensitive to the sun. If your child is sensitive to the sun, be sure to let the school know.

### Good sense in the sun:

- **Use a sunscreen all year round.**
  - Choose a broad-spectrum sunscreen that is SPF 15 or higher. Read the label to be sure it screens out both kinds of ultraviolet rays: ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB). NEVER use baby oil as a sunscreen.
  - Apply sunscreen carefully. Pay special attention to the face, ears, nose and the tops of the feet.
  - Apply sunscreen BEFORE your children go outside. Between 15 and 20 minutes before going out is best.
  - Reapply sunscreen at least every 2 to 3 hours while your children are playing outside. You should also reapply after swimming or perspiring.
- **Dress to protect.** Don't depend on sunscreen alone to protect your children.
  - Be sure children wear a hat, shirt and pants while playing outdoors.
  - Remember that sheer clothing will allow the sun to pass through.

- **Watch the time of day.**
  - Children should not play unprotected in the sun between 11 AM and 4 PM. The sun is most dangerous during these times.
  - Encourage kids to play in the shade, especially between 11 AM and 4 PM.
- **Be careful on cloudy days, too.**
  - Even on cloudy days, most of the sun's rays reach the ground. You can get a serious sunburn on a cloudy day.
  - You can also get a sunburn from sunlight reflecting from snow, water or sand.

### Sun safety means:

- Wearing clothes that cover arms and legs
- Wearing a wide-brim hat
- Using a sunscreen that is SPF 15 or higher



# Preventing the Spread of Illness

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## Handwashing

Handwashing is the most important way to help children stay healthy and prevent the spread of illness. Children should learn to wash their hands often and well, especially before eating and after using the toilet. Teach your children at home, so they will be able to wash properly at school.

To wash hands well:

- 1. WET** hands under running water.
- 2. SCRUB** with soap. Slowly count to five while scrubbing.
- 3. LOOK** to be sure all parts of your hand are clean. Check the backs, between the fingers and under the nails.
- 4. RINSE** under running water.
- 5. DRY.**

Teach your children to wash their hands:

- **Before** - eating
- **After** - using the toilet
  - playing outdoors
  - playing with pets
  - visiting someone who is sick
  - coughing or sneezing

## Help Stop Illness from Spreading

Illnesses can spread easily among children who spend time together in a classroom. In addition to teaching your children how and when to wash their hands, there are several other things you can do to help prevent the spread of illness.

- **Teach your children to cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.** After they use a tissue, they should drop it into a trash can. If they cough or sneeze into their bare hands, they should wash their hands.
- **Learn to recognize the signs of illness and keep your children home from school when they're sick.**

Common signs of sickness are:

- Changes in behaviour. A change in a child's behaviour is a clear sign that he or she is not well.
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Fever
- Rash
- Coughing up coloured phlegm

Many childhood illnesses — like colds, flu, chicken pox, measles and mumps — are caused by viruses. Most children who have an illness caused by a virus will feel much better after a few days of rest, good food and lots of liquids.

When children have been home sick, you need to be sure they stay home until they are well enough that they won't pass the illness to other children when they return to school.

# Hand Washing!



**Wash all parts of your hands:**

- the backs
- between fingers
- under nails
- thumbs

**Wash your hands:**

- Before eating
- After using the toilet
- Before, during and after cooking
- After changing diapers
- After handling soiled items such as bed linen, commodes, clothing, and toys.
- After petting animals

*Washing your hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce the spread of germs.*

Public Health Services

NOVA SCOTIA  
Department of Health

If your child gets any contagious disease you should tell you school and/or your local Public Health Services Office.

## Facts about Some Common Childhood Illnesses

When your children start school, you may find that you're hearing about childhood illnesses that are new to you. This section offers some information to help you deal with some of the most common illnesses.

One question many parents have is how to tell the difference between a cold and the

flu. These are not the same illness. The flu is usually more serious.

A cold and the flu have several of the same symptoms: runny, stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat and coughing. The big difference is that a child with the flu will also have a high fever that can last 3 or 4 days, a headache, body aches and will often feel very weak and tired.

A cold is usually over sooner than the flu — a child with the flu can be sick for as long as 10 days.

Facts About Some Childhood Disease			
Disease	Symptoms	When can it spread?	How long should children stay home from school?
<b>Chicken Pox</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rash</li> <li>• Red spots that fill with fluid, then become crusty over a few days.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chicken pox can spread starting 1 to 2 days before the rash appears. It can be spread until the last spot crusts over.</li> <li>• Chicken pox is spread by direct contact with blisters and by fluid from the nose and throat that are carried through the air.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children should stay at home until all the spots have dried and crusted over or 5 days after the first spots appear.</li> </ul>
<b>German Measles</b> (Rubella)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low fever</li> <li>• Runny nose</li> <li>• Rash spread over the body</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rubella can spread from 1 week before until at least 4 days after the rash begins to show.</li> <li>• Rubella is spread by direct contact and by germs carried in the air.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children should stay at home until 7 days after the rash appears.</li> </ul>

## Facts About Some Childhood Disease

Disease	Symptoms	When can it spread?	How long should children stay home from school?
<b>Mononucleosis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever</li> <li>• Sore throat</li> <li>• Swollen glands</li> <li>• Tiredness</li> <li>• Skin rash</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mono can spread for up to a year through fluids from the throat, through direct contact or through germs carried in the air.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See a doctor if you think your child has mono.</li> <li>• Children should stay at home until they feel well. Your doctor will let you know when your child can go back to school.</li> </ul>
<b>Mumps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever</li> <li>• Tender, swollen glands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mumps can spread from 6 to 7 days before symptoms appear until 9 days after they appear.</li> <li>• Mumps are spread through direct contact with the saliva of someone who has mumps.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children should stay at home for 9 days after symptoms appear.</li> </ul>
<b>Fifth Disease</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very red rash on cheeks (Cheeks can look like they have been slapped)</li> <li>• 1-4 days later a red, lace-like rash appears</li> <li>• Rash lasts 1 – 3 weeks and becomes brighter in sunlight or heat</li> <li>• Fever</li> <li>• Headache</li> <li>• Bodyache</li> <li>• Sore throat</li> <li>• Runny nose</li> <li>• Child often does not feel sick</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before rash appears</li> <li>• Spread by contact with nose and throat secretions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children may attend school if they feel well enough to take part in activities.</li> <li>• Pregnant women who have been in contact with someone who has Fifth Disease should contact their doctor.</li> </ul>

## Facts About Some Childhood Disease

Disease	Symptoms	When can it spread?	How long should children stay home from school?
<b>Pertussis</b> (Whooping Cough)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A cough with a crowing or whooping sound when the child breathes in. This cough can last for up to 3 months.</li> <li>• Clear, thick mucous</li> <li>• Runny nose that lasts for 1 to 2 weeks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whooping cough can spread from 1 to 2 weeks before the cough starts until 5 days after treatment with antibiotics has begun. If no treatment is given, it can spread for 3 weeks after the cough begins.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See a doctor if you think your child has whooping cough.</li> <li>• Children should stay at home for 5 days after treatment begins or for 3 weeks if no treatment is given.</li> <li>• Close family contacts should be treated to prevent spread.</li> </ul>
<b>Pink Eye</b> (Conjunctivitis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Scratchy” or painful eyes</li> <li>• Watery eyes</li> <li>• Discharge from eye</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pink eye can spread as long as the child has it.</li> <li>• It is spread by contact with the discharge for the eyes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See a doctor if you think your child has pink eye.</li> <li>• Children should stay home for 24 hours after treatment with antibiotic eye drops or ointment is started. Children can remain in school if no treatment is required.</li> </ul>
<b>Scarlet Fever</b> (Scarletina, a mild form of Scarlet Fever)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever</li> <li>• Sore throat</li> <li>• Fine rash</li> <li>• Blotches appear when you press on the skin</li> <li>• Skin feels rough, like sand paper</li> <li>• Flushed cheeks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If Scarlet Fever is treated by a doctor, it can spread for between 24 and 48 hours. If it isn’t treated, it can spread for between 10 and 21 days</li> <li>• Scarlet Fever is spread by direct contact and by germs carried in the air.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See a doctor if you think your child has Scarlet Fever.</li> <li>• Children should stay at home until 48 hours after the start of treatment.</li> </ul>
<b>Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever</li> <li>• Sore throat</li> <li>• Lack of energy</li> <li>• Small, painful blisters in the mouth</li> <li>• Skin rash, often with blisters, usually on hands and feet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spreads by direct contact with saliva or feces of an infected person</li> <li>• Spreads through the air as well as by direct touch</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children may continue going to school if they feel well enough.</li> </ul>

## Head Lice

### What are head lice?

Head lice are tiny insects that live in the hair, close to the scalp. Lice lay eggs — called nits — that stick to strands of hair very close to the scalp.

There are many myths about head lice but the truth is that:

- Anyone can get head lice. It has nothing to do with whether you're clean or dirty.
- Head lice DO NOT carry diseases and do not make people sick.

### What do head lice look like?

Head lice are small and may be difficult to see. They have a flat, grayish-brown body with six legs. They do not have wings and cannot fly. It is often easier to see the nits (lice eggs). Nits are shaped like tiny teardrops and have a brownish-white colour. Nits are firmly attached (glued) to a strand of hair and will not move unless you pull them from the hair with a nit comb or your fingernails.

### How do lice spread?

Head lice do not jump or fly between people. They spread very quickly:

- When someone's hair touches the hair of a person who has lice
- By sharing personal items or clothing with a person who has head lice. These include things like combs, brushes, barrettes, towels, hats, scarves and pillowcases.

### Can I prevent it?

To prevent head lice:

- Teach your children not to share personal items that are used on the head. This means things like brushes, combs, barrettes, headbands, elastics, towels, hats, helmets, toques and scarves.
- Teach your children to put their hats and scarves in their coat sleeves or backpacks when they take them off at school.
- Keep long hair tied back or braided.

- Check your child's head regularly:
  - once a week as part of your routine
  - after every sleepover
  - every day during lice outbreaks at school

You'll find directions on how to check for head lice in the back of this book.

### What should I do if my child gets head lice?

The keys to controlling head lice are:

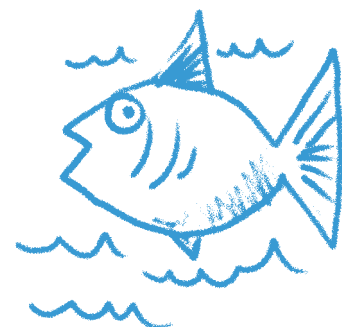
- Two treatments, 7 – 10 days apart, for every family member who has lice
- Daily lice combing between treatments
- Careful checking of everyone who has been in close contact with someone who has head lice
- Cleaning personal and household items that someone with lice may have used

You'll find detailed information on how to treat head lice in the back of this book.

If you have questions or need more information, contact your local public health office.

Head lice are easy to catch. If any of your children have head lice, notify their friends' parents, their school and any groups they participate in — like brownies, cubs or sports teams.

Your child can usually return to school after treatment the first has been completed, but you should check with the school to be sure about their policy. Let your child's teacher know that the head lice have been treated.



## Scabies or The Itch

### What is scabies?

Scabies — sometimes called the “itch” — is a contagious skin infection. It is caused by a tiny bug, called the itch mite, that can only be seen under a microscope. Mites can burrow under the skin and lay eggs. This burrowing causes the scabies infection.

### What does a scabies infection look like?

Scabies is a fine, red, itchy rash. It may infect the entire body, but it usually shows up between fingers, or on the wrists or forearms, on the tummy, or on the inside of the thighs. Scabies can infect any part of the body. The rash is very itchy and uncomfortable. It always feels worse at night. Too much scratching may cause a more serious skin infection.

### How is scabies spread?

Scabies is spread by close personal contact with an infected person, usually by hand-to-hand contact. It may also be transmitted through contact with articles of clothing, bedding, or towels used by the infected person. Scabies is very easy to catch. Outbreaks of scabies are common in schools and daycares. When one family member has scabies, it is likely that everyone in the family will catch it too.

### How long does a scabies infection last?

Untreated, scabies can infect the entire body and an infected person can infect others. Proper treatment will get rid of the scabies mites almost immediately, and the rash and itching will disappear within a week.

### Can I prevent scabies?

Scabies is difficult to prevent. One reason for this is that you can be infected with scabies mites for 2 to 6 weeks before a rash appears. Scabies can be spread during this time. To help prevent scabies, you can:

- Avoid contact with people who have scabies.
- Teach your children not to borrow or lend clothing and other personal items.

### What should I do if my child gets it?

- If you think your child has scabies, he or she should stay home from school until it is properly treated.
- See your family doctor or public health nurse. Follow treatment directions carefully. The rash and itching will disappear within 2 to 3 weeks. All family members should be treated whether they show symptoms or not. A second treatment may be needed 7 to 10 days after the first.
- The Department of Health recommends one application of a cream containing 5% Permethrin, such as NIX™. The cream should be left on for only 12 to 14 hours and then washed off. Follow the directions on the cream exactly as written.
- If any family members are under 2 years of age or if you are pregnant or breastfeeding, check with their doctor before treating for scabies.
- Wash all clothing, bedding and towels your child has used within the 2 days before being treated for scabies. Machine wash in hot water and dry for at least 20 minutes on the hot cycle of the dryer.
- Notify your child’s school. Your child may have caught scabies at school and other parents need to be on the lookout for it.
- Itching may last for a short while after treatment. This is normal and does not mean that the treatment did not work. Treatment can be repeated 7 to 10 days after the first one, but only if a new scabies rash appears



### **If my child gets scabies, when can he or she go back to school?**

- Check with your child's school to find out what their policy is on when children can return to school. If properly treated the scabies infection will be cured with the first application of the cream (12 to 14 hours). Your child can usually return to school as soon as scabies treatment is completed.
- To be sure that the treatment has been successful, see your doctor or public health nurse.

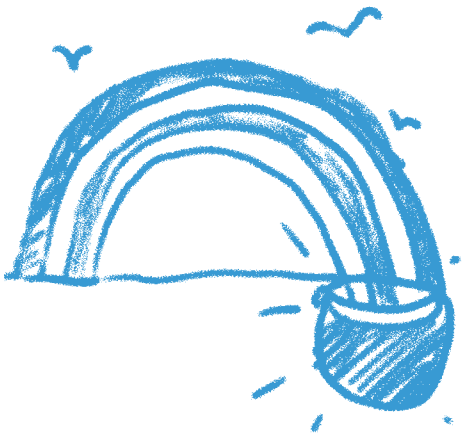
## **Ringworm**

### **What is ringworm?**

Ringworm is a skin infection caused by a fungus (not by worms!)

### **What does it look like?**

Ringworm appears on the scalp, skin or nails. Ringworm usually starts as a small blister and then spreads to a larger, ring-shaped patch. This patch will be scaly and may be raised around the edge. It is usually quite itchy and flaky. If ringworm is on the scalp, there may be a bald spot around the infection. If it occurs on the feet, it may cause cracking between the toes.



### **How does it spread?**

Ringworm spreads through skin-to-skin contact with a person who has it, from animals or from soil. You can also get ringworm by using the clothing, combs, brushes, bedding or towels of an infected person.

### **Can I prevent it?**

- Avoid close contact with anyone who has ringworm.
- Check your children's heads for signs of ringworm.
- Check pets and farm animals for signs of ringworm. (Be aware that pets and farm animals can have ringworm without showing any signs of infection.) Teach your children to wash their hands after playing with animals.
- Teach your children not to borrow or lend hats, combs or other personal items.

### **What should I do if my child gets it?**

- See your family doctor or public health nurse. Ringworm can be treated with a combination of creams and drugs. Treatment may take as long as four to six weeks.
- Notify your child's school. Your child may have caught ringworm at school and other parents need to be on the lookout for it.
- Wash all clothing, bedding and towels your child has used. Machine wash in hot water and dry for at least 20 minutes on the hot cycle of the dryer. Wash combs and brushes in hot, soapy water.
- If your child has ringworm, be sure that he or she washes his or her hands every time they touch the infected skin.

### **If my child gets ringworm, when can he or she go back to school?**

Check with your child's school to find out what their policy is on when children can return to school. Your child can usually return to school as soon as ringworm treatment is started.

## Impetigo

### What is impetigo?

Impetigo is a skin infection caused by a bacteria.

### What does it look like?

Impetigo usually begins with small blisters or sores on the face, near the corners of the mouth and nose, or on ears or hands. It can start anywhere there is a break in the skin, such as a cut, sore or insect bite. Impetigo sores are itchy and last longer than an ordinary sore or pimple. They may ooze a honey-coloured fluid and form a yellowish crust when they scab over.

### How does impetigo spread?

Impetigo is spread by direct contact with an infected person or with items that have been in contact with the fluid from impetigo sores. Impetigo can also be spread by using towels, clothing or other personal articles used by someone with impetigo. Some types of impetigo are very contagious and will spread quickly unless treated at once.

### How can I prevent impetigo?

- Wash hands frequently. This is important whether or not someone in the family has impetigo. Help everyone in your family to get into the habit of washing their hands often.
- Wash small cuts, scratches and bites and keep them covered.
- Avoid direct contact with anyone who might have impetigo.
- Check for signs of impetigo and seek treatment quickly.

### What should I do if my child gets it?

- See a doctor if you think your child has impetigo. The doctor will make sure that the sores really are impetigo and prescribe treatment. Impetigo is usually treated with an ointment or with medicine taken by mouth.
- Remove crusts and scabs by soaking them in warm water and gently washing with soap and water. Then apply the ointment the doctor has prescribed. Repeat this two or three times a day until the sores are healed. Throw away the cloths you use to scrub the sores.
- Cover sores with bandages. This will help keep children from scratching and keep the fluids from the sores away from others. Throw bandages away when you remove them.
- Wash anything that is touched by the fluid from the sores.
- Give each person in the family their own separate soap, towels and washcloths. It is especially important to keep personal articles used by the infected person away from those used by other family members.
- Notify your child's school. Your child may have caught impetigo at school and other parents need to be on the lookout for it.

### If my child gets impetigo, when can he or she go back to school?

The doctor will tell you when your child can return to school. Check with your school to find out what their policy is on when children can return to school.

# For More Information

For this and other publications produced by the Nova Scotia Department of Health visit our web page at: [www.gov.ns.ca/Health/Publichealth](http://www.gov.ns.ca/Health/Publichealth) or contact the Public Health office in your area.

## Public Health Services Offices

### Public Health Services

*Serving Annapolis, Kings, Lunenburg, Queens, Digby, Yarmouth and Shelburne Counties*

### Public Health Services

23 Earnscliffe Avenue  
P.O. Box 1180

**Wolfville**, N.S. B4P 1X4

Phone: 542-6310 Fax: 542-6333

### Public Health Services

60 Vancouver Street

**Yarmouth**, N.S. B5A 2P5

Phone: 742-7141 Fax: 742-6062

### Public Health Services

Barrington Plaza, #3640 Hwy 3

P. O. Box 68

**Barrington Passage**, N.S. B0W 1G0

Phone: 637-2430 Fax: 637-3352

### Public Health Services

Digby General Hospital

67 Warwick Street, 3rd floor

P. O. Box 1718

**Digby**, N.S. B0V 1A0

Phone: 245-2557 Fax: 245-5517

### Public Health Services

175 School Street

P.O. Box 694

**Liverpool**, N.S. B0T 1K0

Phone: 354-5738 Fax: 354-3152

### Public Health Services

14 High Street

P.O. Box 96

**Lunenburg**, N.S. B0J 2C0

Phone: 634-8730 Fax: 634-7330

### Public Health Services

Clare Medical Centre

P. O. Box 150

**Meteghan Centre**, N.S. B0W 2K0

Phone: 645-2325 Fax: 645-3250

### Public Health Services

Roseway Hospital

P. O. Box 125

**Shelburne**, N.S. B0T 1W0

Phone: 875-2623 Fax: 875-1574

### Public Health Services

c/o Annapolis Royal Health Centre

St. George Street, Box 144

**Annapolis Royal**, N.S. B0S 1A0

Phone: 532-2381 Fax: 532-2113

### Public Health Services

Suite 109, 215 Dominion Street

**Bridgewater**, N. S. B4V 2K7

Phone: 543-0850 Fax: 543-8024

### Public Health Services

#5246, Highway 10

P.O. Box 106

**New Germany**, N.S. B0R 1E0

Phone: 644-2710

### Public Health Services

Western Kings Memorial Health Centre

Orchard Street, Box 249

**Berwick**, N.S. B0P 1E0

Phone: 538-8782 Fax: 538-9590

### Public Health Services

Soldier's Memorial Hospital

462 Main Street, Box 211

**Middleton**, N.S. B0S 1P0

Phone: 825-3385 Fax: 825-0599

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*Serving Cape Breton, Victoria, Inverness,  
Richmond, Antigonish and Guysborough  
Counties*

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235 Townsend Street, 2nd Floor  
**Sydney**, N.S. B1P 5E7  
Phone: 563-2400 Fax: 563-0508

Public Health Services

23 Bay Street  
**Antigonish**, N.S. B2G 2G7  
Phone: 863-2743 Fax: 863-7476

Public Health Services

P.O. Box 224  
14 Bay Street, Unit 2  
**Arichat**, N.S. B0E 1A0  
Phone: 226-2944 Fax: 226-1594

Public Health Services

P.O. Box 6, 30 Old Margaree Road  
**Baddeck**, N.S. B0E 1B0  
Phone: 295-2178 Fax: 295-3432

Public Health Services

P.O. Box 299, Eastern Memorial Hospital  
**Canso**, N.S. B0H 1H0  
Phone: 366-2925 Fax: 366-2900

Public Health Services

P.O. Box 46  
Buchanan Memorial Community  
Health Centre  
**Neil's Harbour**, N.S. B0C 1N0  
Phone: 336-2295 Fax: 336-2202

Public Health Services

P.O. Box 26  
**New Waterford**, N.S. B1H 4K4  
Phone: 862-2204 Fax: 862-3155

Public Health Services

708 Reeves Street, Unit 33  
**Port Hawkesbury**, N.S. B9A 2S1  
Phone: 625-1693 Fax: 625-4091

Public Health Services

P.O. Box 111, 15102 Cabot Trail  
**Cheticamp**, N.S. B0E 1H0  
Phone: 224-2410 Fax: 224-2903

Public Health Services

633 Main Street, 2nd Floor  
**Glace Bay**, N.S. B1A 4X9  
Phone: 842-4050 Fax: 842-4004

Public Health Services

P.O. Box 106, Guysborough Hospital  
**Guysborough**, N.S. B0H 1N0  
Phone: 533-3502 Fax: 533-2167

Public Health Services

P.O. Box 118  
26 Upper Railway Street  
Inverness Consolidated Hospital  
**Inverness**, N.S. B0E 1N0  
Phone: 258-1920 Fax: 258-2721

Public Health Services

P.O. Box 275, St. Mary's Hospital  
**Sherbrooke**, N.S. B0J 3C0  
Phone: 522-2212 Fax: 522-2094

Public Health Services

**St. Peter's**, N.S.  
Phone: 1-888-272-0096  
(Office closed, please call above number)

Public Health Services

7 Fraser Avenue  
**Sydney Mines**, N.S. B1V 2B8  
Phone: 736-6245 Fax: 736-7909

**Public Health Services**

*Serving Colchester, Cumberland and Pictou Counties and most of the Municipality of East Hants*

Public Health Services  
Colchester Regional Hospital Annex  
201 Willow Street, 3rd Floor  
**Truro**, N.S. B2N 4Z9  
Phone: 893-5820 Fax: 893-5839

Public Health Services  
18 South Albion Street  
**Amherst**, N.S. B4H 2W3  
Phone: 667-3319 Fax: 667-2273

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825 East River Road, 2nd Floor  
**New Glasgow**, N.S. B2H 3S6  
Phone: 752-5151 Fax: 755-7175

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P.O. Box 104  
5 Mill Village Road  
**Shubenacadie**, N.S. B0N 2H0  
Phone: 758-2050 Fax: 758-7013

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*Serving Halifax regional Municipality, West Hants and Mount Uniacke*

Public Health Services  
201 Brownlow Avenue, Unit 4  
**Dartmouth**, N.S. B3B 1W2  
Phone: 481-5800 Fax: 481-5803

Public Health Services  
P.O. Box 908  
**Windsor**, N.S. B0N 2T0  
Phone: 798-2264 Fax: 798-5922

Public Health Services  
Box 1, Forest Hills Shopping Centre  
**Head of Jeddore**, N.S. B0J 1P0  
Phone: 889-2143 Fax: 889-3013

Public Health Services  
Musquodoboit Valley Memorial Hospital  
**Middle Musquodoboit**, N.S. B0N 1X0  
Phone: 384-2370 Fax: 384-3310

Public Health Services  
P.O. Box 58  
Eastern Shore Memorial Hospital  
**Sheet Harbour**, N.S. B0J 3B0  
Phone: 885-2470 Fax: 885-4017

## Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech Clinics

Clinic locations labeled “A” offer hearing testing and services (Audiology). Locations labeled “S” offer speech and language services.

Location	Contact Number	Services
Halifax	423-7354	A, S
IWK Health Centre	470-7146	A
IWK Newborn Hearing	470-7146	A, S
Amherst	667-1141	A, S
Antigonish	867-4197	A, S
Bridgewater	543-4603, ext. 2248	A, S
Dartmouth	464-3084	S
Digby	245-2501, ext. 265	S
Evanston	625-3100, ext. 257	S
Glace Bay	842-2868	S
Kentville	678-7381, ext. 1400	A, S
Liverpool	345-3436, ext. 246	S
Lower Sackville	869-6150	A, S
Middleton	825-3411, ext. 233	S
Musquodoboit Hbr.	889-4117	S
New Glasgow	752-7600, ext. 2520	A, S
Pictou	485-4324, ext. 125	S
Sheet Harbour	885-3628	S
Shelburne	875-3011, ext. 270	S
Springhill	597-3773	S
Sydney	567-7781	A, S
Sydney Mines	736-2831, ext. 146	A, S
Truro	893-5512, ext. 512	A, S
Waterville	538-3103, ext. 156	S
Windsor	792-2084	S
Yarmouth	742-3541, ext. 364	A, S

## Mental Health Services Clinics

Mental Health Services  
South Shore Regional Hospital  
90 Glen Allan Drive  
**Bridgewater, NS B4V 3S6**  
Ph: (902) 527-5228  
Fx: (902) 543-3120

Mental Health Services  
Yarmouth Regional Hospital  
60 Vancouver St.  
**Yarmouth, NS B5A 2P5**  
Ph: (902) 742-4222  
Fx: (902) 742-2320

Mental Health Services  
Annapolis Valley District Health  
Authority  
PO Box 490  
121 Orchard Street  
**Berwick, NS B0P 1E0**  
Ph: (902) 538-3111 (X 121)  
Fx: (902) 538-1490

Mental Health Services  
Colchester Regional Hospital  
207 Willow St.  
**Truro, NS B2N 5A1**  
Ph: (902) 893-5526  
Fx: (902) 893-5551

Mental Health Services  
c/o Highland View Regional Hospital  
110 East Pleasant Street  
**Amherst, NS B4H 1N6**  
Ph: (902) 667-5400 (6344)  
Fx: (902) 667-5959

Mental Health Services  
Aberdeen Hospital  
835 East River Road  
**New Glasgow, NS B2H 3S6**  
Ph: (902) 752-1137  
Fx: (902) 928-0297

Mental Health Services  
St. Martha's Regional Hospital  
25 Bay Street  
**Antigonish, NS B2G 2G5**  
Ph: (902) 867-4368  
Fx: (902) 864-4496

Mental Health Services  
Cape Breton Regional Hospital  
1482 George St.  
**Sydney, NS B1P 1P3**  
Ph: (902) 567-8093  
Fx: (902) 567-7905

Mental Health Program  
IWK Health Centre  
5850-5980 University Ave.  
**Halifax, NS B3J 3G9**  
Ph: (902) 428-8086  
Fx: (902) 428-2937

# How to Find, Treat and Prevent Head Lice





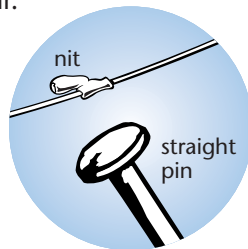
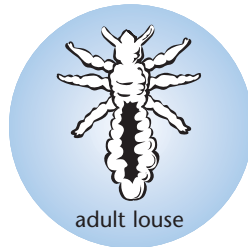
## Checking for Head Lice

If your children have been in contact with someone who has lice, you need to check carefully to see if they have caught them. Head lice spread easily, so if one family member has lice, others may have it too. Check everyone else in the family. Luckily, head lice do not live on pets!

When checking for head lice, you can use a toothpick or something with a point to lift each hair. A magnifying glass can also be helpful.

1. Find a comfortable seat near a good light. Bright daylight is best. **You are looking for both lice and nits (lice**

**eggs).** Lice move quickly and can be difficult to see, so it's more likely that you'll see nits. Nits are shaped like tiny teardrops and have a brownish white colour. They are stuck firmly to individual hairs and will not move unless you pull them from the hair with your fingernails or a nit comb.



2. Start behind the ears and check the entire head, hair by hair. **Check each hair from root to tip.**

If any of your children have head lice, notify their friends' parents, their school and any groups they participate in — like brownies, cubs or sports teams.

## How to Treat Head Lice

**The keys to controlling head lice are:**

- Two treatments, 7 – 10 days apart, for every family member who has lice
- Daily lice combing between treatments
- Careful checking of everyone who has been in close contact with someone who has head lice
- Cleaning personal and household items family members with lice may have used

This treatment process must be followed carefully.

You don't need to treat everyone in the family — just those who have lice. Contact your doctor before treating someone who is under age 2 or who is pregnant. If you are unable to use chemical treatments or would like information on alternative treatments, contact your local Public Health Services Office.

**To treat head lice, you will need:**

- Head lice treatment: This can be bought at a drug store. Usually one bottle for each person with lice is enough. Children with long or thick hair may need more than one bottle.
  - A regular comb
  - A lice comb: you can buy these at any drug store
  - A clean towel
  - A timer or clock
  - A quiet activity to occupy your child during the treatment — for example, music, TV, book, colouring book, etc.

**There are no short cuts to getting rid of Head Lice!**

Treat everyone in the family who has lice on the same day. Do one person at a time.

**1 Comb hair with a regular comb to remove tangles.**

**2 Apply the treatment exactly as the package describes.** It is very important to follow product instructions carefully.

- Shake the bottle.
- Check the package to see if the hair should be dry or damp.
- Put the lice treatment all over the scalp and rub in well.
- Be sure that the treatment coats all of the hair, from the scalp to the ends.
- Leave the treatment on the hair for as long as the package recommends and no longer. The chemicals in the treatment can be harmful if left on a child's head longer than the package directs. Use a clock or timer to be sure you get the time right.

**3 Rinse out the treatment over the sink.**

Don't rinse in a bathtub where it could get onto other parts of the body. Dry the hair with a clean towel.

**4 Comb the hair with a regular comb to remove tangles.**

**5 Comb for lice.**

- Pick a place to start — for example, the top of the head or behind an ear.
- Part the hair into thin, narrow sections. Comb one section at a time.
- Place the lice comb against the scalp and pull it to the end of the hair.



- Check the teeth of the lice comb after each pull through the hair. Rinse off any lice or nits under running water or wipe them away with a tissue. Drop each tissue into a bag.
- Keep combing the hair one section at a time until you have done the entire head several times.
- When you finish combing, wash the lice comb under the tap. Use a nailbrush or old toothbrush to get between the teeth of the comb. If you've been using tissues to wipe the comb, tie the bag closed and throw it away.

Lice treatments kill lice but do not always kill all of the nits. Lice combing removes lice, but may not remove all of the nits. If you like, you can remove all of the nits from your child's hair, but if you follow the recommended treatment and comb for lice every day between treatments, it is not necessary to remove all of the nits to prevent the spread of head lice.

**6 Daily lice combing.** This is described in the next section. Do not skip this step!

**7 Use the lice treatment again, 7 to 10 days after the first treatment.** Follow the same steps you used for the first treatment. The second treatment kills any lice that may have hatched from nits that were not killed by the first treatment.

**8 Continue checking family members regularly for at least 3 weeks** after the second treatment to be sure everyone is free of lice.

## Daily Lice Combing

**Comb for lice everyday between the first and second treatments.** The first treatment may not have killed all of the nits. Daily combing is needed to remove any lice that may have hatched. **Don't skip this step.** If the new lice aren't removed, they'll lay more eggs and start the cycle over again.

Comb for lice in a comfortable seat near a good light. Bright daylight is best.

- 1** Wet your child's hair. It should be damp, not dripping wet.
- 2** Comb hair with a regular comb to remove tangles.
- 3** Pick a place to start — for example, the top of the head or behind an ear.
- 4** Part the hair into thin, narrow sections. Comb one section at a time.
- 5** Place the lice comb against the scalp and pull it to the end of the hair.
- 6** Check the teeth of the lice comb after each pull through the hair. Rinse off any lice or nits under running water or wipe them away with a tissue. Drop each tissue into a bag.
- 7** Keep combing one section at a time until you have done the entire head several times.
- 8** When you finish lice combing, wash the comb under the tap. Use a nailbrush or old toothbrush to get between the teeth of the comb. If you've been using tissues to wipe the comb, tie the bag closed and throw it away.

## Household Clean-Up

- **Wash combs, brushes and hair accessories** (scrunchies, barrettes, headbands, etc.) with hot, soapy water until all lice or nits are removed. Then soak them in very hot water for 10 minutes. Or you can put them in the freezer for 24 hours.
- **Use very hot, soapy water to wash clothing, sheets, towels, pillowcases, stuffed toys and other items used by any family members with head lice in the last 2 days.** Anything that can't be washed — blankets, coats, stuffed toys — can be treated in one of the following ways:
  - Put it in a closed plastic bag for 10 days.
  - Put it in a hot dryer for 20 minutes.
  - Put it in the freezer for 24 hours.
  - Iron it.
- **Vacuum mattresses, carpets and furniture.** Head lice can live off the human head for about 2 days. Do not use lice spray around your home. There is no proof that spraying will help control lice and it may harm family members or pets.

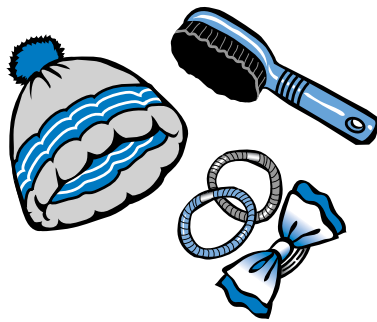


**Daily lice combing is very important.**

# Preventing the Spread of Head Lice

- If your child has head lice, check with your school to find out what their policy is on when children can return to school. Your child can usually return to school after the first treatment has been completed. Let your child's teacher know that your child's head lice have been treated.
- Check your child's head regularly:
  - once a week as part of your routine
  - after every sleepover
  - every day during lice outbreaks at school
- Keep long hair tied back or braided.
- Teach your children not to share personal items that are used on the head.

This means things like brushes, combs, barrettes, headbands, elastics, towels, hats, helmets, toques and scarves.



- Teach your children to put their hats and scarves in their coat sleeves or backpacks when they take them off at school.

**There are no short cuts to getting rid of Head Lice!**

Public Health Services



[www.gov.ns.ca/health/PublicHealth](http://www.gov.ns.ca/health/PublicHealth)