

Ready, Set, Learn

Helping your
preschooler get
ready for school



AchieveBC

Ready, Set, Learn

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Dear Families:

Welcome to Ready, Set, Learn. This booklet is designed to support you in helping your preschooler get ready for school. As your child's first and most important teacher, you play a vital role in preparing your child for school. Starting Kindergarten is an important milestone in life. Many things contribute to a child's readiness for school. Some of these are:

- Confidence
- Relationships with friends
- Language development
- The ability to communicate needs, wants and thoughts to adults and children
- The ability to follow instructions and routines
- A setting that encourages creativity, motivation, cooperation and persistence.

**A child learns to
prepare for school
through play.**

A child learns to prepare for school through everyday activities and play. While many of today's families balance many responsibilities, spending time with your child (playing, snuggling, reading, and talking) will make a big difference.

Together with your child, enjoy and learn from the ordinary things in life as you go about your daily routines.

As British Columbians, we celebrate the rich cultural diversity of our society. Before entering Kindergarten, your child's learning may be enriched through participation in many cultural and family traditions.

This Ready, Set, Learn booklet offers information about the typical development of a preschooler, including tips for supporting your child's learning in key areas of development. Remember these are just guidelines. Children learn at their own pace. If you have concerns about your child's development, talk to your doctor or public health nurse. A child with special needs may develop more slowly or differently and may have goals to achieve that are more appropriate to their needs and abilities. Refer to information provided by your doctor or other health professionals for specific special needs support information.

1 | Talking

Your Preschooler and... Talking

Language development is a cornerstone for being ready to learn in school. Language is the main way that your child will communicate with the world around them, expressing their needs and wishes. Generally, between the ages of three and five your child's vocabulary will almost double to about 1500 words. Typically at age three, a child can use four-to-five-word sentences beginning with words like "I" and "you". Most three-year-olds will begin using "what", "where" and "how" to ask many questions, and will know social words like "hello", "please", and "thank you". The best way to support language development is simply to talk with your child and listen to them. Most preschoolers have the language skills to be part of family and play groups. Take advantage of opportunities that arise in everyday living to have conversations.



Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.

Try some of these with your preschooler:

- 1.** Talk with your preschooler about the day's activities or about plans for the following day. Discuss the day's events at bedtime.
- 2.** Point out names of things to your child as you ride in the car or walk to the store.
- 3.** Listen carefully to your child. Show that you are interested in your child's ideas and ask questions about what you hear from him or her.
- 4.** Use rhymes to increase interest in language. Play rhyming games and read rhyming stories and poetry.
- 5.** Sing songs. Make up simple songs about everyday activities like having lunch and sing them together with your child.
- 6.** Have fun with tongue twisters. Help your child learn to say, "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers."
- 7.** Expand your child's sentences. If your child says, "Daddy cook soup," respond with, "Yes, Daddy is cooking vegetable soup for lunch."
- 8.** Ask your child to tell you a story about a picture he or she has drawn.
- 9.** Talk about colours: "Look at that blue car." "Are you going to wear your red dress?"
- 10.** Play word and sound games: "How many words do you know that start with the same sound as your name?"

2 | Books

Your Preschooler and... Books

Helping your child learn to enjoy books is crucial. There is a strong link between what preschoolers know about books, words, sounds and letters and their readiness for school. At three years old, your child will typically have an increasing interest in books and the written word. Preschoolers need to be encouraged to love books. You should enjoy sharing books with your child, but don't try to teach reading at age three. Some children will learn naturally on their own, but most children won't start actual reading until they are in Kindergarten or Grade 1. Make sure your child doesn't get frustrated. Encourage questions and use humour. Over time, encourage your preschooler to help tell the stories in books, particularly with favourite ones. Read for fun, with your child and on your own.





Try some of these with your preschooler:

- 1.** Set aside a special time each day to read to your child. Pick a special spot in your home where it is quiet and you and your preschooler are comfortable.
- 2.** When sharing books, ask questions about the pictures: “Where do you think the woman is going?” Pause to discuss the meanings of new words.
- 3.** Snuggle with your preschooler while you read. By feeling safe and nurtured, your child will learn more easily.
- 4.** Encourage your child to select and look at books on their own. Sit down beside your child and read your own book to show that books are enjoyable.
- 5.** Encourage repetition. There will be favourite books your child will want to look at over and over again. Being familiar with words and letters helps children learn.
- 6.** Get your preschooler a library card. Go to the library regularly and explore the children’s section together. Encourage your child to choose books to take out.
- 7.** Plan a book exchange party. Invite your child’s friends and their parents over and ask them to bring five books they want to trade. It’s a good way to have different books at home without spending too much.
- 8.** Introduce books into your day-to-day activities. Have a reading picnic, play dress up and act out a book, or read your recipe out loud as you bake with your child.

3 | Numbers



Your Preschooler and... Numbers

Understanding simple concepts of numbers, time, distance and shapes will help your child develop the math skills they will need at school. Remember that like all learning, numbers should be fun and connected to real life. Many children learn better by counting the stones on the beach or apples in a grocery bag than by looking at flash cards. Typically, three-year-olds will be able to count to ten. Most preschoolers will be able to sort objects into groups and to name five different shapes (such as triangle and square). At age three children are generally beginning to understand time intervals, forms of measurement like weight and height, and distances like near and far.

Try some of these with your preschooler:

1. Count as a part of everyday routines with your child: “Please get me six spoons for lunch.” “How many letters are in the mailbox?”
2. Discuss the order of events to help your child understand time: “This morning at 10:00 we are going to the store. After lunch, you will have time to play.”
3. Make a calendar with your child. Write in special days (his or her birthday, the trip to the library) and have your child mark off each day until it arrives.
4. Help your child learn your family’s phone number and address.
5. Collect objects (buttons, stones, blocks) and sort them by shape, colour or size.
6. Talk about shapes. Identify shapes in the world around you and talk about them with your child: “That window is square.” “That cookie is round.”
7. Start a growth chart for your child. Talk about the ideas of weight and height.
8. Ask your child to guess how many cups of water it will take to fill a pitcher or bowl then fill the pitcher and check the guesses.
9. Use words that give direction when asking your child to do something: “Look under the box.” “Put it beside your bed.”
10. Make a counting book. Glue groups of small objects (like buttons or feathers) on pieces of paper and then bind the pages together to make a “book”. When browsing through the book together, help your child count the different groups of objects.

4 | Feelings



Your Preschooler and... Feelings

Your child's emotional development is also an important part of getting ready for school. Since birth, your child has been developing a range of emotions, from sad, to happy, to angry. Entry to school will be helped by learning to handle feelings appropriately. As part of emotional growth, your child will typically develop deeper qualities like caring, self-esteem, resilience and assertiveness, and may better understand others' feelings. All of these things will help him or her meet the challenges of school. Generally, your preschooler will begin to talk more about feelings and understand both negative and positive emotions. The ability to cope with frustration and anger typically improves between age three and Kindergarten. Preschoolers may begin to develop a sense of self-esteem and confidence. The family is the focus of your child's emotional development.

Try some of these with your preschooler:

1. Talk about feelings and what might cause them: "You are feeling really happy. Is it because we're going to the park?"
2. Expand vocabulary using new words to describe your child's feelings like "disappointed", "frustrated", "excited" and "surprised".
3. Listen to and accept your child's fears. Reassure and comfort with a cuddle, showing the love that you have for your child.
4. Encourage your preschooler to talk about him or herself: "Tell me three things that you like to eat." "Can you think of something that makes you happy?"
5. Pause while reading a book and ask your preschooler how a character might be feeling.
6. Show how to handle emotions positively yourself. Suggest to your child different ideas for coping with emotions and how you do it.
7. Address inappropriate behaviour immediately and calmly. Preschoolers usually have fewer tantrums, but may fight over things like toys. Help cope with tantrums by discussing afterward what helps your child feel better when experiencing frustration or anger.
8. Model patience and persistence in all your tasks. Children will learn to stick with things by acting like their parents.

5 | Getting Along with Others

Your Preschooler and... Getting Along with Others

Up until now, your preschooler has been mostly concerned with his or her own needs. Usually around the third birthday, this “egocentric” view of the world begins to gradually change. Typically, your child will be more interested in playing with friends, although friendships may be brief. Your child may be able to show empathy, take turns, and begin to understand the concept of sharing. As well, more and more preschoolers are able to follow rules and instructions and are interested in seeking approval from adults. It is important to set basic rules and stick to them consistently. Getting along with both children and adults so that your child may do well in a classroom environment is a very important part of helping your child get ready for school.



hello

please

thank you

Try some of these with your preschooler:

- 1.** Most preschoolers look for approval. Give approval (with encouraging words and actions like smiling) for taking turns and waiting for a turn as a part of your child's everyday routine.
- 2.** Introduce your preschooler and friends to simple games that require taking turns, such as card games like *Go Fish*.
- 3.** Give simple one or two-step instructions to follow and then praise your child for listening and completing the task. Be delighted and supportive when your child behaves well.
- 4.** Model good manners, saying "please" and "thank you" to your child.
- 5.** Encourage your child to have regular responsibilities around the home. An activity such as choosing clothes independently allows your child to get used to routines and expectations as a part of the day.
- 6.** See how others do it. Reading books about friends with your child is another low-key way to introduce your child to socializing.
- 7.** Provide lots of opportunities for your child to interact with friends. Set up play dates with friends on a regular basis. Encourage your child to say "Hello" to playmates when he or she sees them.
- 8.** Keep play dates short – one to two hours, and small – one to two friends. Make available a variety of activities that children will enjoy.
- 9.** Be available. Supervise your child. Don't just leave the children to play by themselves and hope for the best. Be close by in case they can't solve their own conflicts, stop playing together, or need a change of activity.
- 10.** Take your preschooler to another child's home. Provide the experience of playing away from your child's own home and learning the rules of another family. Depending on your child's comfort level, consider leaving your preschooler in the home of trusted friends without you, first for a short time and then for longer periods.
- 11.** Invite your own friends over. Since young children pay close attention to what adults do and often imitate their behaviour, model for your child by inviting adults to visit in your home. Have a double play date with a friend who has children.

6 | Play

Your Preschooler and... Play

Play is the “work” of children. Through play your preschooler will explore and discover the world and his or her role in it. By providing a variety of different play activities and exposing your child to different types of situations, you will be sure the brain receives the stimulation it needs to thrive. Typically, a child of three will engage in imaginary play, tell stories and create characters. Your preschooler will play alone most of the time, but may be increasingly able to play with others. A sense of ownership may be developing. At age three, children can typically throw, catch, and kick a ball as well as pedal a tricycle – be sure your child wears an approved and well-fitting helmet whenever on a tricycle. Many three-year-olds will have the hand-eye coordination to try more complex activities.





Try some of these with your preschooler:

- 1.** Family members are your child's favourite playmates. Make time to laugh and play together. Make play a part of the things you do with your child every day. Enjoy!
- 2.** Balance your child's schedule. It is important that your child have access to both structured activities and free playtime.
- 3.** Keep a variety of books and odds and ends from around the home on hand for down times. If you have them in your home, puzzles or art supplies can be enjoyable. Rotating toys allows your child to experience something new. As your preschooler may be upset about you giving away toys, wait until your child has forgotten about them first.
- 4.** For imaginative playtime, have some of your old clothes for "dress up" and have every day objects that will allow your child to create his or her own "pretend" stories. Clothes and shoes with different openings are good to practice lacing, zipping, buttoning and tying.
- 5.** Pretend along with your child. Encourage the imagination. At a make-believe tea party, ask: "Is your cup of tea too hot?"
- 6.** Provide opportunities for your child to make personal choices about play activities. Decision-making will increase your child's sense of confidence and enjoyment.
- 7.** Set up opportunities for your child to be messy with glue, flour and water play-dough, water or paint. Encourage your child's creativity by proudly displaying their creations.
- 8.** Play outside. Encourage your child to delight in some fresh air and fun activities like playing in the garden or at the park.
- 9.** Use bean balls or bags to play throwing and catching games with your child. These can be made at home by sewing up scraps of cloth with dried beans or peas inside.
- 10.** Encourage help with household chores if your child is interested. Tearing lettuce, folding clothes, making beds and setting the table may be work for you, but these tasks can be fun for your preschooler – and will set patterns for responsible behaviour as they grow up.

7 | TV and Electronic Media

Your Preschooler and... TV and Electronic Media

TV, computers and video games are a major influence in our world. Electronic media may become increasingly important in your child's daily life as he or she grows older. However, there still is a great deal not known about its impact on children's development. If you have them in your home, too much TV and too many electronic games may become a negative influence in your child's life. Electronics should not take the place of books, creative play, or exercise.





Try some of these with your preschooler:

- 1.** Set and enforce limits. For a preschooler, a total of one hour of TV and computer time per day is a reasonable limit. Many experts recommend a maximum of two hours of television a day for children of all ages.
- 2.** Set a good example. Spend your free time reading, listening to music, or exercising.
- 3.** Watch TV with your children. Comment on what you are seeing, or ask your child a question about what is going on.
- 4.** Watching TV or playing computer games before bed stimulates brain activity and can keep your child from falling asleep. Reading a book with your child before bed may be more relaxing.
- 5.** Be selective as to content. Look for programming that has some age appropriate educational value. Avoid shows that are violent or scary.
- 6.** Keep electronics in a family area so that you can monitor their use and interact with your child while playing or watching.
- 7.** Talk about the negatives. If you see something violent or scary, be sure to talk about it with your preschooler. For example, if you see a house fire on the news, tell your child: "Gee, that fire was scary, but look, no one was hurt." Reassuring explanations can eliminate a lot of fear and confusion as your child learns more about the world.
- 8.** If available, use a VCR to record children's programming to have on hand.
- 9.** Keeping the television off during meal times will make conversation a priority, which contributes to language development and learning.
- 10.** Limit computer use. Using the computer does not necessarily help your child get ready for learning. If you choose to allow your child to use a computer, look for games and software for preschoolers that allows you and your child to experience the computer together.

8 | Vision and Hearing



Your Preschooler and... Vision and Hearing

Children learn from what they see and hear in the world around them. Hearing and vision will be an important part of your child's learning when they go to school. Many parts of vision work together to help a child see and understand. Actions like reaching, running, catching and balancing all involve skill in eye-hand coordination. Watch for signs that your child may have an eye problem and see your family doctor or optometrist if you are concerned. Vision checks are covered by medical insurance. Your child does not need to know letters to have a vision check.

Good hearing is important for speech and language development. Children who have trouble hearing find learning to read more difficult. By age three your child will hear and understand most of what is said and will listen to stories and can answer questions. Watch for signs that your child may have trouble hearing. See your family doctor if you are concerned. Some ways to protect your child's hearing are to keep your child away from smoke as smoke causes increased ear infections, and when cleaning the ears, don't use cotton swabs or anything in the ear canal.

Signs that your child may have an eye problem are:

- holding objects very closely;
- avoiding picture books, puzzles or other near distance activities;
- tilting the head, using an unusual posture or covering one eye when looking at something;
- too much blinking or eye rubbing;
- complaining of headaches;
- burning, itchy eyes;
- trouble catching, building, balancing or doing other eye-hand coordination activities.

Signs that your child may have trouble hearing are:

- regular ear infections;
- not responding to sound well, or responding better when speech is loud;
- having trouble telling where sounds are coming from;
- developing speech late.

Try some of these with your preschooler:

- 1.** Play games such as throwing and catching a ball and balancing or building blocks to help develop eye-hand coordination.
- 2.** Show how important it is to protect the eyes to avoid eye injuries. Model using eye protection around dangerous materials or equipment. Store poisons out of reach of your child to help prevent eye injuries.
- 3.** Show your child the proper way to handle sharp objects like toys with pointed ends. Provide simple rules for your child, such as, “We walk, not run, when we have sharp objects in our hands.” If possible, provide children’s blunt scissors for your child to use instead of sharp ones.
- 4.** Talk, sing and read to your child — enjoy playing with sounds — all the activities listed on page 3.
- 5.** Washing hands well helps to prevent ear infections. Show your preschoolers how to take care of their health by washing their hands with soap and warm water. This will help when they are ready to go to school.
- 6.** Show your child ways to protect his or her hearing by avoiding loud sounds, or wearing ear protection when around loud sounds, including loud music.



9 | Healthy Teeth



Your Preschooler and... Healthy Teeth

Teeth are important to the total health of your child. Even though baby teeth are replaced by adult teeth, they are needed to help your child speak clearly, eat well and have a healthy smile. Baby teeth also hold space in the mouth until the adult teeth come in by age 12 or 13. By age three, most children have 20 teeth. Tooth brushing helps prevent tooth decay and it needs good hand skills – skills not fully gained until age five, so preschoolers need your help to brush their teeth in the morning and before going to sleep at night. One way to make tooth brushing a healthy habit in your family is to brush your teeth at the same time as your child.

Try some of these with your preschooler:

- 1.** Use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste on the toothbrush. Fluoride is a proven way to prevent cavities. Some children’s toothpastes do not have fluoride, so check the labels before you buy.
- 2.** Practise putting the right amount of toothpaste on the brush with your child. Keep the toothpaste out of reach of younger children. The flavour of some fluoride toothpastes may tempt your child to use more than needed, and just a little fluoride is all that’s needed to help protect your child’s teeth.
- 3.** Make a game of brushing teeth or make up a tooth brushing song like “Brush, brush, brush your teeth” to the tune of “Row, row, row your boat.”
- 4.** Choose tooth friendly snacks like cheese cubes, cut up fresh fruit, or rice cakes with peanut butter. Some foods such as dried fruits stick to the teeth, and are best saved for eating when tooth brushing can occur soon after eating.
- 5.** Help your preschooler have good feelings about going to the dentist. Ask your public librarian for children’s books about going to the dentist and read them together.

10 | Physical Activity



Your Preschooler and... Physical Activity

Being physically active is important for your preschooler's healthy growth and development. Assisting preschoolers to build physical activity into their daily routine helps to create an active lifestyle that will stay with them for life. Physical activity builds strong bones, strengthens muscles and the heart, and helps develop flexibility, good posture and balance. An introduction to a range of activities will get your preschooler ready for safe physical activity at school. An easy way to increase your child's physical activity level is to choose activities to do in many 5 -10 minute periods throughout the day. At three years of age your child should be able to jump off the ground with two feet, hop on one foot for a few steps, use pedals to ride a tricycle, dance to music in rhythm, and catch a large ball. It is important to recognize that young children develop these skills at their own pace and adults should be patient while preschoolers learn.

Try some of these with your preschooler:

- 1.** Play active games with your child such as tag or hide-and-go-seek; throw, kick and hit a ball; or go swimming together.
- 2.** Walk with your child to the park or playground to be active together. Teach playground safety to your child (waiting their turn, sliding feet first and staying away from moving swings and bottoms of slides). When playing outside, protect your child from the sun by using sunscreen with at least SPF 15.
- 3.** Preschoolers can be active inside, too. Run and jump while dancing.
- 4.** Walk with your child to a friend's house, to a corner store, or around your neighbourhood.
- 5.** Encourage preschoolers to do things on their own by allowing them to help carry the groceries, or do simple housework and gardening tasks. These can be fun for your child, and also help to increase physical activity.

11 | Healthy Snacks

Your Preschooler and... Healthy Snacks

The preschool years are important years for learning to taste and enjoy an expanding number of foods prepared in different ways. Children need a variety of foods from each group of Canada's Food Guide every day to help them learn, play, and grow. See page 21 for a Website link that explains Canada's Food Guide for preschoolers. Children have small stomachs, so they need to eat every two or three hours. Plan for three meals a day with healthy snacks in between.

At meal and snack times, children learn both eating and social skills. Children's appetites go up and down through growth spurts so let them choose whether or not to eat and how much. Sit down with your child at meal time and snack time and eat with them. Children learn by watching your example. Preschoolers like to ask why – so tell them what foods help build their bones, muscles and brains.

As a rule, offer foods from two food groups of Canada's Food Guide for a healthy snack. Teach your child that healthy foods are everyday foods. Sometimes foods are 'other foods' such as pop, chips and candy that are high in sugar and/or fat. Serve sticky foods such as cereal bars, dried fruit and fruit leather at mealtimes or when children are able to brush their teeth.





Try some of these with your preschooler:

- 1.** Plan healthy snacks with your child before your child gets hungry. If you know you will be away from home during snack time — pack a snack that can be safely kept in your bag or carry along an insulated cooler bag.
- 2.** When you are grocery shopping, let your child choose a new fruit or vegetable to try. Supermarkets often have ‘how to prepare’ information. Talk about foods from different countries. Has your family eaten edamame (soybean pods)? Try different breads such as pita, chapattis or tortillas.
- 3.** Offer your preschooler a choice: “Would you like carrot sticks or broccoli trees?”
- 4.** Avoid “grazing” (constant snacking) or “sipping” drinks all day. This is tough on teeth and children need good appetites to do well at mealtimes. To prevent grazing say, “Okay, snack time is almost over. Let’s finish up so we can go play again.”
- 5.** Choose from some of these popular and easy snack choices:
 - toast triangles with peanut butter (or almond butter for a change);
 - whole grain crackers and hummus;
 - fig cookies with milk;
 - bean and cheese burrito “bites”;
 - banana chunks with vanilla pudding for dipping;
 - milk or soy smoothie with fresh or frozen berries;
 - veggie sticks with cottage cheese for dipping;
 - fruit sections and milk;
 - plain yogurt with canned fruit pieces;
 - thinly sliced meat rolled around bread “fingers”;
 - smoked salmon and wholegrain rice cakes;
 - hard cooked egg sandwich quarters.

I Want to Know More About...

There are lots of resources available with more information on helping your child get ready to learn. Here are some recommendations:

Achieve BC

This provincial government website brings together the latest educational tools and information for promoting learning and achievement in early childhood, as well as helpful support for parents. Click on the links to “Booklets” and “Children: 3-5 Years” for information. Achieve BC also has information for parents on literacy. Click on “Literacy” to access proven reading, writing and oral language resources.

www.achievebc.ca

BC Child Care Resource & Referral Programs

These programs offer quality child care referrals, resources and support to all child care providers and parents in over 170 communities across the Province of British Columbia. The website provides a list of contacts for local Child Care Resource and Referral Programs.

www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/parents.htm

Children and Family Development: Early Childhood Development

Regional offices can provide information for families on local childhood development resources. Check the blue pages of your phone book for local listings. Links to early childhood development programs and information are available on the Ministry website.

www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/early_childhood/index.htm

BC HealthGuide Handbook and First Nations Health Handbook

The BC HealthGuide Handbook has 190 health topics, including advice on when to see a health professional. The First Nations Health Handbook provides information and specific resources for First Nations people in BC. Both handbooks are available to BC residents free of charge by calling the Ministry of Health Information Line at 1-800-465-4911.

Toddler’s First Steps

This resource, available online or from your local public health unit, assists parents and caregivers of children six months to three years of age in understanding what contributes to their child’s healthy growth and development.

www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/cpa/publications/index.html#T

BC NurseLine

Confidential health information, advice and referrals are available from specially trained registered nurses 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Nurses provide timely assessment, health information and resources to help you make wise health decisions for you and your family, including when to see a health care professional. Nurses do not provide medical diagnosis, and their advice does not replace that of physicians. Pharmacists are also available to answer medication-related calls from 5 pm to 9 am daily.

Call: 1-866-215-4700 toll-free across British Columbia or 604-215-4700 in Greater Vancouver.

Deaf and hearing-impaired throughout BC call toll-free 1-866-889-4700.

Translation services are available in 130 languages.

BC HealthGuide OnLine

The BC HealthGuide OnLine website provides reliable, medically approved information on more than 3,000 common health topics, tests, procedures and other resources to BC residents. Login with your BC postal code to:

www.bchealthguide.org

BC HealthFiles

The BC HealthFiles are a series of over 150 one-page, easy-to-understand fact sheets on a wide range of public and environmental health and safety issues, including immunizations.

www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/index.stm

BC Council for Families

The BC Council for Families offers training, resources and publications designed to strengthen and support families. Call to request a catalogue of resources or check the Council's website. Publications may be ordered on line or by phone, or fax.

Call: 1-800-663-5638 or 604-660-0675 in Vancouver.

www.bccf.bc.ca

Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating for Preschoolers

This Internet resource describes how you can use *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* to promote healthy eating with your preschool child aged two to five years.

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/res/fg_preschoolers-prescolaire_ga_e.html#2

Dial-A-Dietitian

Dial-A-Dietitian is a free nutrition information line available to British Columbians in over 130 languages including English, Cantonese, Mandarin and Punjabi. Registered dietitians offer easy to use nutrition information and advice between 9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday, and offer referrals to the BC NurseLine when indicated.

Call: 1-800-667-3438 toll-free across BC or 604-732-9191 in Vancouver.

www.dialadietitian.org

Health Canada

The latest health information including headlines, advisories, warnings and recalls of products, links to health organizations and an A-to-Z index including information for Aboriginal peoples. The website is in English and French.

www.hc-sc.gc.ca

Mental Health Information Line

Provides taped information on provincial mental health programs as well as symptoms, causes, treatment, support groups and publications relating to a number of mental illnesses. Staff can provide local contact information for parents. This is a 24-hour line.

Call: 1-800-661-2121 or 604-669-7600 in Vancouver.

Poison Control Centre

This centre provides information on poisons and treatment.

Call: 1-800-567-8911 or Vancouver Emergency: 604-682-5050 or Vancouver Non-Emergency: 604-682-2344.

Public Health Authorities

Public Health provides services and supports for preschoolers' health and development within each Health Authority. Contact the Public Health unit in your area for questions related to nutrition, hearing, dental, speech, immunization, and overall health and development. For the public health unit in your area look under the blue pages in your telephone book.

www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/socsec/index.html

BC Public Library Services

This is an online list of contacts for local public libraries provided by the BC Ministry of Education.

www.bcpl.gov.bc.ca/public/contacts.php

This Virtual Reference Desk for Public Libraries of British Columbia provides Internet links and an online catalogue for BC Public Libraries.

www.bcpl.gov.bc.ca/VRD

Invest in Kids

“Comfort, teach and play.” The Invest in Kids website has all sorts of ideas for supporting your child’s development at different stages, in English and French.

Call: 1-877-583-KIDS.

www.investinkids.ca

Parent Help Line

This is a national telephone and Internet service providing support and information to parents 24 hours a day. You can access over 250 messages that address typical parenting questions. You can also speak with a phone counsellor if you have specific questions. The website is in English and French.

Call: 1-800-603-9100.

www.parentsinfo.sympatico.ca

Today’s Parent

This publication, available in print and online, provides information on all aspects of parenting, child development, children’s behaviour, and many other topics related to children and families. The easily searchable website allows you to ask questions of experts or join discussions with other parents. Copies of the magazine may be borrowed from your local public library.

www.todaysparent.ca

