



Getting Ready and Being Healthy for School

The first day of school is a big step, both for you as a parent and for your child. But getting ready for school begins long before that day. There are many things you, as a parent, can do to make sure your child is academically ready. There are also steps you can take to be sure your child is healthy when he starts school. Healthy children are children ready to succeed.

TAKE YOUR CHILD TO THE DOCTOR

- To register or enroll your child for Kindergarten, your child must have a physical examination by a doctor or a nurse practitioner and all immunizations must be up-to-date and your child may need to be tested for lead poisoning.
- If you can't take your child to visit the doctor because you do not have health insurance, Maryland Children's Health program (MCHP) can help. For more information or to apply for healthcare coverage, call 877-KIDS-NOW (877-543-7669) or visit www.dhmh.state.md.us/mma/mchp.

GIVE YOUR CHILD HEALTHY FOODS

- Children learn and do their best in school when they eat a variety of healthy foods in child-sized portions. Offer fruits, vegetables, whole-grain breads, cereal, low-fat yogurt, milk and protein.
- Give your child a healthy meal each day before leaving for school. If you have trouble affording healthy foods, you may be able to get help. Call 800-332-6347 for information about food stamps or visit www.dhr.state.md.us. Call 800-242-4WIC for information about the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) or visit www.dhmh.state.md.us.
- Many elementary schools offer a healthy school breakfast and lunch every day. Children from low-income families may eat school meals free or at reduced cost. Call your school for information.

HELP YOUR CHILD TO BE ACTIVE

- School-age children need to run, walk, jump and play actively every day. Practice outside now to run, jump, and to play tag, hide-and-seek, and with a ball.

SET UP GOOD SLEEP HABITS

- A good night's sleep will help your child be alert and active in school and stay healthy. Most five-year-olds need 10 to 12 hours of sleep a day. Don't wait until your child starts school to establish a bedtime routine. Put your child to sleep at the same time each night. Have nighttime routines—things that you do every night before bedtime, such as helping your child brush her teeth, wash her face, read a book, sing, and talk together.

CHECK HEARING, VISION AND TEETH

- A child who has trouble seeing or hearing will have problems in school. Be sure your child has a hearing and vision test each year. If you think your child has trouble hearing or seeing, talk to his doctor.
- Your child's dental health is important, too. Have a dentist examine your child before he or she starts kindergarten and at regular visits after that.

DISCUSS ANY CONCERNS

- Children develop at different rates. Not all children learn things at the same ages. If you are concerned about your child's development or think your child may have a disability, talk with your child's doctor or call the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program at 800-535-0182 or visit http://cte.jhu.edu/dse_eis/about-mitp.html. The school can help you with the screening process.