

Preparing for Kindergarten

Key Health Messages for Parents



It's a big step when children start their education. The partnership between health and education can be summed up by the phrase: **Healthy Kids Learn Better.**

The checklist, resources, and websites below will help you as you get your child ready for kindergarten.

Vaccination

- Review and update your child's vaccination before kindergarten—keep them up to date to prevent disease. Make an appointment with your Community Health Centre to have your child vaccinations brought up to date. This is a free service by Alberta Health Service.

Vision screening

- Children's vision should be checked by the time they are 3 years old and every year after. The cost of the yearly eye exams are covered by Alberta Health until your child is 19 years old.

Hearing/Speech screening

- If you wonder if your child may have a hearing or speech problem, check with your doctor—you may need a referral to an audiologist and/or speech specialist.

Dental check-up

- Regular dental check-ups should begin by age 3. Early and regular oral health care at home is very important to a child's overall health.

Sleep

- Children **4** and **5** years old need about **11** hours of sleep each night...even on the weekends!

Screen Time

- Limit the time spent watching TV, video games, DVD players, i-Pad computers, etc., to no more than 2 hours a day.

Health Conditions

- Make sure that the school has up-to-date information about any health or medical conditions your child may have, including allergies. Check with your school about their policy on what foods may not be allowed at school (e.g., like peanut butter and nuts).

Healthy Eating

- “Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide” (www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide) has advice for all ages and stages.
- Key messages: breakfast every day, offer a wide variety from the four food groups, don’t restrict nutritious food because of the fat content, and most important...be a good role model!
- Involve your child in the planning and preparing of food to build knowledge and skills, so your child will accept a greater variety of foods.

Active Living

- Your child needs at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.
- Play and have fun being active as a family.

Routine

- Routines (like bed time, mealtime, and story time) are important. They help a child cope better with new experiences (www.albertahealthservices.ca/2577.asp).

Backpack basics

- A backpack should weigh **no more than 15%** of your child’s body weight. It should also have wide shoulder straps (www.albertahealthservices.ca/577.asp).

Safety–Injury Prevention

- Review and practice road and bus safety as well as “social safety” (things like staying with the group, not talking to strangers, etc.).

Helpful Resources

- Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide (www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide).
- www.albertahealthservices.ca: follow links...drop-down box “Information for Parent”...follow the many items or links.
- Health Link Alberta at 403-943-LINK (5465) in the Calgary area, or 1-866-408-LINK (5465) toll-free.
- www.saferoads.com
- www.beststart.org