



## Get a Healthy Back-to-school Start

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Put health on the list as you get your kids ready to go back to school this year. Getting recommended vaccinations on time, eating a healthy lunch each day, and sleeping enough each night will help children and teens succeed in the classroom. Get started with our expert advice.

### Vaccinations prevent diseases

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says vaccinations will prevent more than 21 million hospitalizations and 732,000 deaths among children born in the past 20 years. However, outbreaks of preventable diseases still happen. Getting your child's vaccinations on time helps protect your child and your communities and schools from outbreaks.

According to the CDC, children newborn through age 6 need vaccines to protect them from 14 serious diseases, including polio, measles, and tetanus. And all children 6 months and older should be vaccinated against flu. Children and teens ages 7 to 18 need booster shots because some vaccine doses wear off over time. They may also be more at risk for certain diseases like meningitis, and need the protection vaccines provide. Check with your child's doctor to be sure.

Preteen and teen girls should be vaccinated against [human papilloma virus \(HPV\)](#). The 3 HPV vaccines, Gardasil, Gardasil 9, and Cervarix, all prevent the 2 types of HPV that cause 70% of all cervical cancers.

The vaccines work only if they are given before an HPV infection occurs. HPV is spread through sexual contact. [The American Cancer Society](#) recommends the 3-dose vaccine for girls ages 11 to 18 because most girls at this age have not become sexually active. This is also an age when girls still will be seeing their doctor regularly and getting other vaccinations.

### A healthier lunchbox

The new school year is the perfect time to try some healthier options in your child's lunch box. By packing your kids' lunches, you can ensure what they're eating is healthy and tastes good. Eating lots of different kinds of food gives the body a variety of nutrients.

- Choose lots of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Healthy eating includes a lot of colors, like green salad, orange carrots, and red strawberries, and it makes lunch more appealing.
- Pack water, 100% fruit juice, or plain low-fat or skim milk to drink. Sports drinks and juice drinks have added sugar and a lot more calories.
- Whole wheat and multi-grain are much healthier than the refined grains found in white bread, cereals, and pasta. Brown rice is also a good choice.
- Choose a variety of foods that contain proteins, carbohydrates, and healthy fats. For example, try lean meats, cheese, whole-wheat crackers, peanut butter, hummus, and low-sugar yogurt.
- Kids need some fat in their diet, but fried foods have high amounts of fat, especially the bad type of fats. Try healthier options like grilled chicken or baked chips.

## **Sleep help for teens**

If your teenager has trouble waking up for school in the morning and is grumpy during the day, it may be more than just typical teen behavior. They may not be getting enough sleep.

The National Sleep Foundation says most children in 6th – 12th grade are getting less than the recommended sleep each night: 9-11 hours for ages 6-13, and 8-10 hours for ages 14-27.

Teenagers who do get enough sleep have been shown to get better grades in school, have a lower body mass index (BMI), and suffer less from depression and thoughts of suicide. They also report feeling happier and getting along better with other family members.

Teenagers who don't get enough sleep are more likely to become drowsy while driving, which is extremely dangerous for themselves and others. A National Sleep Foundation poll found that 15% of drivers in 10th – 12th grade drive while drowsy at least once a week.

To help your teenager get more sleep at night, you can:

- Set a consistent bedtime, even on weekends.
- Keep computers, cell phones, and TV out of your teen's bedroom.
- Cut out caffeine after lunchtime.
- Create a relaxing bedtime routine that includes reading, listening to music, or taking a bath.
- Be a good role model by getting enough sleep yourself.
- Talk to your teen about the importance of sleep.

If your teenager complains about difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep and home remedies have not helped, discuss the problem with your family doctor