

Keep your child safe

Here are some safety tips to help protect your children:

- Know where your children are playing at all times and that they are being actively supervised
- Teach them to obey crossing guards and bus drivers
- Always cross the road with children who are nine years of age or less, as young children do not have the ability to be aware of traffic; even older children may need to practice crossing the road safely
- Do a safety-check before children play at the playground: reduce their chance of choking on play equipment by removing drawstrings, scarves, bike helmets and not taking skipping ropes into the playground area
- Children need to wear the proper helmet correctly every time they bike, skateboard, scooter, in-line skate, ski, skate or toboggan
- Children under 13 should be buckled up in the back seat: check to be sure they are not slouching in the seat and ensure that the lap belt is low and snug over their hips and the shoulder belt is over their shoulder and across their chest
- Booster seats are required by law for children under the age of eight, between 40-80 lbs (18-36 kg) and who are under 4'9" (145 cm) in height; boosters will keep the seat belt in the correct position over your child's body and prevent critical injuries

- Protect your child from second-hand smoke by obeying Ontario's laws that do not allow smoking on school property and smoking in vehicles with children under the age of 16 present

York Region *Health Connection* provides free, confidential information and support for public health related topics.

Public health nurses and inspectors are available from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday to provide information and links to programs, services and resources.

For more information contact
York Region *Health Connection* at
1-800-361-5653, TTY 1-866-252-9933 or
e-mail: HC@york.ca



www.york.ca



A Healthy Start to School

The logo for York Region, featuring a stylized white starburst above the text "York Region" in a bold, sans-serif font.

York Region

York Region Community and Health Services

Starting school is a very exciting step. With encouragement and understanding, the transition to this new stage in life will be a fulfilling adventure. Here are a few ideas to make starting school a healthy and rewarding time.

Balance nutrition, activity, rest and a smoke-free home

When children are well nourished, well rested, physically active and live in a smoke-free home they are better able to learn and excel in their day-to-day activities.

Young children have small stomachs and high energy needs, so it is important to provide nutritious snacks (cheese, whole grain crackers, mini pitas or fresh fruit). Use cold packs in lunches to keep food safe for eating. Lunches should include foods from at least three of the four food groups from *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*. Involving your kids in making their lunches may increase the chance they will eat them and let you see their likes and dislikes.

Children need to be active to strengthen growing muscles. Children five and up need 60 minutes of heart pumping physical daily activity and should be limited to less than two hours of screen time per day. Unstructured play time together is a wonderful way to increase physical activity and spend quality time with your child. It is important that children get enough rest to replace the body's energy. Regular bedtimes assist your child's growth and development.

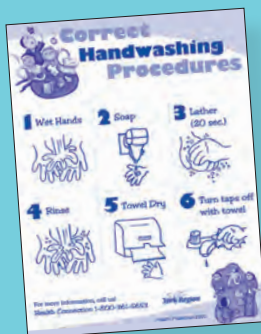
A smoke-free environment is essential for keeping your children healthy. Children are more vulnerable to the effects of smoke exposure, as their lungs are still growing and developing. Smoking in the home increases your children's risk of getting colds, ear infections, bronchitis, asthma and pneumonia.

Encourage good handwashing

Germs that can cause illness, like cold and the flu, can be spread by shaking hands, sharing objects (pencils, computers, water bottles or lip gloss) or touching door handles and light switches. Handwashing, when done correctly, is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of germs that can cause illness. Remind your child to wash their hands:

- **Before:** eating or drinking, handling food or visiting someone who is sick
- **After:** using the bathroom, blowing their nose, sneezing or coughing into their hands, handling food, touching garbage or animals, playing outdoors or visiting someone who is sick
- When they look or feel dirty

Set a good example for your child by ensuring that **you** wash your hands correctly and at these key times, too.



Dress your child for the weather

Make sure your child is kept comfortable and protected by making sure they have outdoor clothing to match the weather. In winter, children need hats, gloves and boots. On hot, sunny days or when the UV index is three or more, remember:

- Wide-brimmed hats covering ears and the back of the neck
- Sunglasses with UV protection
- Light cotton, long-sleeved shirts and pants
- Sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher

Immunize against serious childhood diseases

1. Immunization is your child's best defence against serious childhood diseases. Ontario law requires that students attending school in Ontario be up-to-date with diphtheria, tetanus, polio, mumps, measles and rubella immunization.

Students who are not up-to-date may be suspended from school.

2. Upon school registration (JK/SK) Public Health will contact you requesting complete immunization history. It is the parent's responsibility, not the health provider's, to maintain a record of a child's immunization and inform Public Health of these immunizations. The name of the vaccine and the date it was given should be included in the yellow Immunization Record. After your initial contact with Public Health, call York Region Community and Health Services, **Immunization services at 1-877-794-1880** every time your child gets any of the above immunizations to ensure Public Health's records for your child are up to date. Please visit www.york.ca/immunization for more information.
3. Some students may be exempted from immunization based on medical, religious or conscientious grounds. Forms for these exemptions may be accessed at www.york.ca/immunization or parents may contact Immunization Services.
4. All vaccines on the Routine Immunization Schedule in Ontario are publicly funded. Vaccines against HPV, hepatitis B and meningococcal disease are offered free of charge for certain age groups at your child's school. Please call *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653, TTY 1-866-252-9933 for further information. Always discuss the benefits and risks of any vaccine with your health provider.

Choose a safe and environmentally-friendly way to get to school

Good habits are important when starting school. Arrive on time and choose a safe and environmentally-friendly way to get to school: walk or take the bus. Walking to school increases physical activity and helps to lessen traffic congestion at the school, which improves safety conditions for children.

Encourage smiles and healthy teeth

Tooth brushing is an important part of your child's daily routine. Use a child-sized toothbrush with soft, rounded bristles and replace it every three to four months (or sooner if the bristles are bent or frayed).

By age four or five, children should be able to brush their own teeth twice a day with supervision. A pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste can be used when the child is old enough not to swallow it. Teach your child to avoid sugary snacks between meals and provide snacks that are healthy and fun. It is also important to take your child to see the dentist regularly to maintain a healthy mouth. Remember to set a good example by letting your child see you take care of your teeth daily.

