

Let's go to Kindergarten!

Information and tips to help prepare your child for a healthy start to Kindergarten!



Lakelands Public Health

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We commit to providing accessible information to all. To request this document in an alternate format, contact your closest health unit office using the contact information above.

This resource was adapted with permission from KFL&A Public Health.

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Getting Started at School

Starting Kindergarten is an exciting time in your child's life. It is normal for children and caregivers to have a mix of emotions about starting school. Your relationship with your child is a positive influence in stressful situations!

To help your child get ready for school, routines are key. You can:

Talk with your child about how they feel about starting school and what to expect.

Read and use the information and tips in this booklet.

Set-up play dates with other children 1:1 and in groups.

Pick daily routines that work best for your family. Ideas include:

- Eating meals together
- Moving our bodies
- A set bed time

Stay positive about starting school. This will help children feel excited and ready to learn.



For More Ideas Visit:

[How Can I Prepare my Child for Kindergarten | Government of ON](#)

Connect with your Community

EarlyON child and family centres offer free drop-in programs. They are open to caregivers and children up to 6 years of age. Find the centre closest to you: [Find an EarlyON centre | Government of ON](#)

Starting school can be hard. It takes a caring community working together to support families. Check out [parentinginpeterborough.ca](#).

Engaging in your Child's Education

Being a part of your child's learning is key. It will set them up for long-term well-being and school success. When a caregiver is engaged, it promotes healthy development. It will also help build a strong connection with your child.

Engage in your child's education by:

Meeting and communicating with your child's teacher.

Talking to your child about their day at school.

Providing a positive learning environment at home.

Helping your child develop positive attitudes towards learning.

Reading to or with your child every day.

Encouraging your child to draw, scribble, copy shapes, and print.

Nurturing your child's interests.



For more information on how to engage with your child's education visit:

[Parent Guide to the Ontario School System | Government of ON](#)

Helping Children Deal with Stress

Starting Kindergarten can be a stressful time. Remember, not all stress is bad. The stress of new experiences can help us grow and build resilience.

Help your child deal with stress by teaching them how to “self-regulate”. This means helping them manage their emotions.

Ask yourself:

“What happened to this child?” instead of “What is wrong with this child?”

Focus on:

Caring for yourself with self-compassion. [Check out this video](#)

Building a strong relationship with your child. [Click here for ideas](#)

If you have questions or concerns about your child’s mental well-being, look for support options through:

Childrens Mental Health Support:

[Parents and Caregivers | School Mental Health Ontario](#)
[Finding Help | Childrens Mental Health Ontario](#)

For more tips on helping your child manage their emotions visit:

- [Helping Your Child Manage Stress Video | HPEPH](#)
- [Self-regulation Info Sheet | The Mehrit Centre](#)
- [Self-regulation for Parents | The Mehrit Centre](#)

Other Local Resources:

[SmartStart Hub](#)
[What’s Available for Families](#)
[Rebound Child and Youth Services Northumberland](#)



Kindness Matters

Teach by being a role model and practicing acts of kindness:

Learn the importance of caring for others' needs.

Feel like they belong.

Make friends.

Improve their self esteem.

Develop skills necessary to make and keep healthy relationships.



Teach by being a role model and practicing acts of kindness:

Be kind with words:

Saying "good morning", "hello", "thank you", "how can I help you?"

Be kind with actions:

Rake leaves for a neighbour, participate in charity events, encourage taking turns and sharing, pick flowers for a friend.

Talk about kindness:

Ask your child what kind things they did today. Point out when you see your child being kind.

Your Child's Immunization Record

It is a parent/caregiver's responsibility to report your child's immunizations and any updates to your local Public Health Unit. Doctors and Nurse Practitioners do not automatically send immunization updates to Public Health.

Steps to Make Sure Your Child's Immunization Records are Up-To-Date:



CHECK

- Review your child's yellow immunization card or health record.
- Verify your child's immunization records with your doctor for any missing vaccines.



VACCINATE

- Ensure your child receives any missing vaccinations or has a valid exemption.
- Contact your doctor or the Health Unit to book an immunization appointment if needed.



UPDATE

- Update your child's immunization record with the Health Unit.
- Visit LakelandsPH.ca/Immunization to find out how.

Helpful Reminders:

Students attending school must be up-to-date with immunizations or have a valid exemption.

Your child is due for immunizations between 4 and 6 years of age.

Keep your child's immunization record updated and in a safe place.

- Option: Download **CANImmunize app** for free on iOS and Android.

For more information on how to protect children with safe and reliable vaccines:

[Recommended Immunizations for Children | Immunize Canada](#)



Healthy Sleep Habits

It is important to develop healthy sleep habits for your child. This will prepare them to learn at school. Good sleep helps children feel calm, regulate emotions, and have more energy.

Tips for success at bedtime:

Have a consistent bedtime routine everyday.

Choose relaxing activities like a bath, reading from a book, or quiet chat before bed.

Avoid TV, computer time, video games, and phone use for one hour before bedtime.



Sleep guidelines:

Aim for uninterrupted sleep with consistent bed and wake-up times, even on weekends.

Age in Years	Hours of Sleep Required
3 to 4	10 - 13 (may include a nap)
5 to 13	9 - 11



For more information on age-appropriate sleep guidelines:

[24 Hour Movement Guidelines | CSEP](#)

Positive Eating Habits at School

Kindergarten is the best time to establish positive eating habits at school. Offer a variety of food to give your child the nutrients and energy they need to learn, grow and play. Use [Canada's Food Guide](#) for ideas!



Start your child's school day with a balanced breakfast. Try these ideas:

Yogurt with frozen berries topped with whole grain cereal

Veggie omelet with whole grain toast

Oatmeal with sliced apple and chopped nuts or seeds

Packing Lunch and Snacks for your Child

Aim for half of what you pack to be vegetables and fruits. Include whole grain foods and protein foods.

Lunch ideas:

Pasta salad, hard-boiled egg and carrots

Bean chili, bun and orange slices

Whole grain wrap, soy butter and canned fruit (in water or 100% juice)

Snack ideas:

Whole grain crackers, cheese and sliced peppers

Apple slices, whole grain muffin and roasted chickpeas

Sliced cucumber, hummus and pita wedges

Meal and snack tips:

Prepare and enjoy food together.

Power-off devices at mealtime and use the time to connect as a family.

Offer vegetables and fruit at every meal and snack.

Kids not eating their lunch? There are a lot of new distractions! Try:

- peeling and cutting foods into bite-sized pieces,
- having them practice opening containers, and
- planning together to find foods that meet both your needs!

Student Nutrition Programs

Many schools offer nutritious free food for ALL students to help them perform their best.

Find out if your school has a program. Ask how you can get involved!



Teach your Learning Eater

Children learn to enjoy new foods over time and at their own pace. Parents and kids each have role to play:



Parents/caregivers decide:

What foods to offer;

When to offer meals and snacks;

Where your child eats.

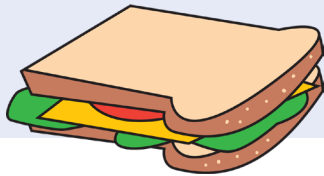
Children decide:

Which foods to eat

(from the foods you have served them);

How much to eat

(trust your child knows when they are hungry or full.)



Nurture a positive relationship with food!

Try not to label foods as “bad, unhealthy”. Feelings of shame and guilt may follow when kids eat less nourishing foods.

Call foods by their actual name. A cookie is a cookie (not a “treat”). An apple is an apple (not “a healthy snack”).

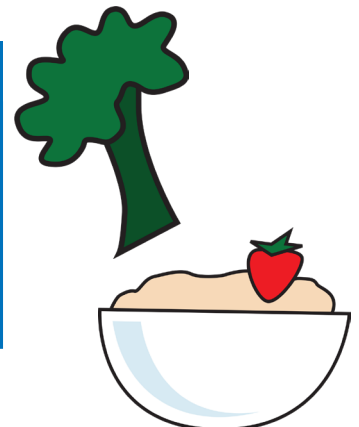
For more information on packing healthy school lunches:

[Lunch Your Kids Will Munch | Lakelands Public Health](#)

Have nutrition questions?

Contact a registered dietitian for free at **Health 811**.

Dial 811 or visit: ontario.ca/health811 to start an online chat.



Moving Our Bodies

Moving our bodies is an important part of healthy living at any age. Daily physical activity improves physical and mental wellbeing. It also builds confidence and helps children create a sense of belonging.



Moving together can be fun and simple. Try:

Spending more time outside.

A daily walk or home dance party.

Spending time playing in an unstructured, child-led way.

Learn more about this here:

[What is unstructured play | Active for Life](#)

[Why unstructured play | Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

For more information on Movement Guidelines:

[Early Years \(0-4\) 24 hour Movement Guidelines | CSEP](#)

For more information about activity to keep your child moving:

[Have a Ball Together | Nexus Health](#)



Getting to School Safely

You can teach your child how to get to school safely. Walking, biking, and scootering to school are great ways to incorporate movement into your child's day.

Safety Tips:

Walking:

Look both ways before crossing the street.

Walk on the sidewalk.

Follow crossing guard signals.

Biking/Scootering:

Wear a helmet.

Have a working bell.

Use hand signals.

Taking the Bus:

Listen to the bus driver.

Stand in a safe place while waiting for the bus.

Stay in your seat when the bus is moving.



For more information on bus safety visit:

[School Bus Safety | Government of ON](#)

Wondering when to transition your child into a booster seat?

[Car Seats | Parachute Canada](#)

Backpack Safety

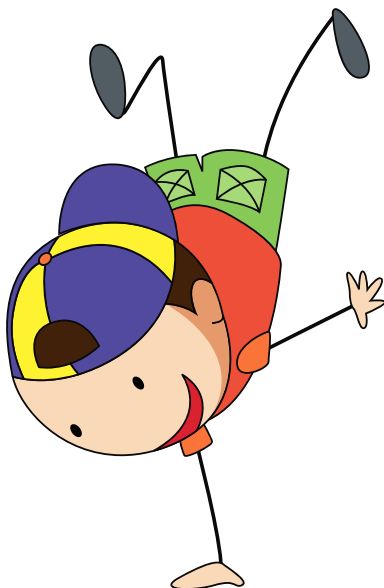
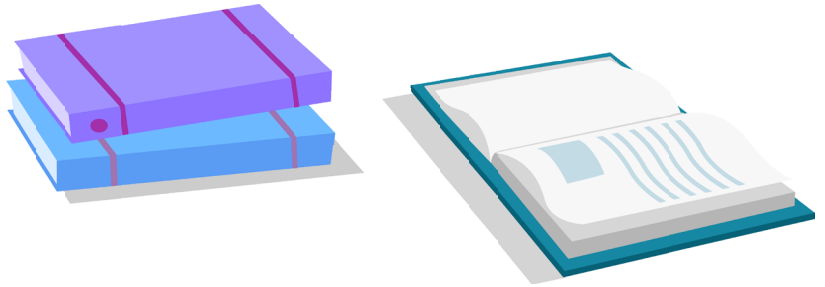
Backpacks are a convenient way for your child to transport supplies to and from school. When backpacks are used incorrectly, they can strain muscles and cause back pain.

Tips for backpack safety:

Teach your child to bend their knees to pick up the backpack with both hands.

Ensure your child uses both straps when wearing the backpack to prevent imbalances.

Lighten the load. It is recommended that children carry no more than 10-15% of their body weight in their backpacks. Only pack essentials!



Do you need a backpack?

Check out Backpacks for Kids | United Way in:

- [Northumberland](#)
- [Peterborough](#)
- Haliburton (contact haliburton@youthunlimitedkaw.com)
- City of Kawartha Lakes (contact [BGC Kawarthas](#))

For more information visit:

[Using Backpacks Safely | My Health Alberta](#)

Screen Time

Less screen time is better. For children 2 to 5 years old, limit screen time to less than 1 hour per day.

Tips to reduce screen time:

Plan screen-free meals, playtime, and bedtime routines. Don't leave screens on in the background.

Model the ways you enjoy screen-free time.

Focus on creating balanced daily routines. Spend time on play, reading, art, games, and social connection.

Avoid screens at least one hour before bed. Screen time can interfere with sleep.

When screens are used, make it a shared experience. Try watching a movie together or playing a family game.

Be consistent in your approach.

Choosing less screen time gives your child more opportunities to:

Play.

Explore.

Sleep better.

Feel ready for being at school.

Be present at home and school.

Build self-regulation skills.

What can I do if my child is upset with screen time limits?

Set shared family limits at an early age.

Use a calm voice.

Acknowledge child's frustration.

Redirect them to another activity or toy.



For more information:

[Screen Time and Young Children | Caring for Kids](#)

[Screen Time and Mental Health | Tip Sheet](#)

[Tips for Families | Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation](#)

Sun Safety

Too much sunlight and UV rays can harm a child's skin. This can cause sunburn, dehydration, heat exhaustion, or heat stroke. UV levels are highest from April to September.

How to Prepare

Put SPF 30 or higher sunscreen on your child each morning.

Dress them in light, loose clothing. Consider UV protective clothing or clothing made from tightly woven fabric.

Send them with:

- A wide brimmed hat
- UV protection sunglasses
- Extra sunscreen
- SPF lip balm
- A refillable water bottle



Encourage Your Child To

- Play in the shade when possible.
- Wear their hat and reapply sunscreen.
- Drink water often throughout the day.

For more information:

[Enjoy the sun safely | Canadian Cancer Society](#)

[Sun safety tips for parents | Canada.ca](#)



Be Weather Ready

Each season brings different risks. Children can be more affected by weather conditions. It is still important that children spend time outdoors. The information below can help keep them safe outdoors.

Hot Weather

Hot and humid days can raise the risk of heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Young children and anyone who is already dehydrated may be more at risk.

Hot Weather Tips

- Follow the sun safety steps listed above.
- Add ice to your child's water bottle for extra cooling.
- Remind your child to tell an adult if they feel dizzy, weak, or sick from the heat.

Poor Air Quality

Poor air quality can happen because of pollution, hot dry weather, or wildfire smoke. Poor air quality can irritate the lungs and affect overall health. Children with asthma may feel these effects more. The [Air Quality Health Index \(AQHI\)](#) shows the level of risk on a scale from 1 (low) to 10+ (very high).

How to Prepare

- Check the local AQHI.
- If your child has asthma or another breathing condition:
 - Tell the school.
 - Make sure they have their inhaler or other needed medication.
 - Ask their healthcare provider for advice about outdoor activity based on AQHI levels.



For more information:

[Air quality and children's health | Canada.ca](#)

[Keep Children Cool! Protect your child from extreme heat | Canada.ca](#)

Be Weather Ready

Cold Weather

Cold temperatures and windchill can increase the risk of frostbite and hypothermia. Children can get cold faster than adults, but most cold related illness can be prevented. Outdoor play still has important health benefits, even in the winter.

How to Prepare

- Dress children in layers.
- Cover areas that can freeze easily, such as ears, fingers, toes, and nose.
- Make sure they wear mittens, a warm hat, and waterproof boots.
- If items get wet or lost, having a spare set will help your child stay warm and comfortable during outdoor play.
- Send extra winter items if possible. These can stay at school or be brought each day.

Encourage Your Child To

- Wear all their outdoor gear during recess.
- Move around to stay warm while they are outside.



Stay Informed

- The Government of Canada [WeatherCAN App](#) or other weather apps with alerts
- The Environment Canada [website](#)
- Local TV and radio stations

School Decisions

Schools may shorten or cancel outdoor time when weather or air quality conditions make it unsafe.

For more information:

[Winter safety: Advice for parents and kids](#) | [Caring for kids](#)
[Cold Weather Injuries](#) | [AboutKidsHealth](#)

Help Create Smoke- and Vape-Free Spaces

No amount of second-hand smoke is safe.

When kids aren't around second-hand smoke or vapour they're less likely to:

- Have breathing problems.
- Miss school.
- Get sick.
- Start smoking or vaping themselves.



It is against the law to smoke or vape in a vehicle carrying children under the age of 16 in Ontario.

For more information:

[Second-hand Smoke | Government of Canada](#)

[Talking early and often to your kids about vaping is the best prevention | Learn the Facts](#)

For help quitting or cutting back on smoking:

Visit [Smokers' Helpline](#), talk to your health care provider or call #811 (Health 811)

Child Development

A child's brain and body develop rapidly during the early years of life. Monitoring their developmental milestones can help you determine if their development is on track.

Development Milestones

[Click here for a list of common milestones](#)

[Your Child's Development, What to Expect | Caring for Kids](#)



Remember:

Every child is unique and develops at their own pace.

If you have questions or concerns about your child's development, it is important to speak to your child's health care provider.

For more information on support services, check out the [SmartStart Hub](#) at Five Counties Children's Centre.

Toilet Learning

Every child is unique, and will be ready for toilet learning when they show specific cues. Help your child toilet learn using the following tips:

Follow their cues.

Create supportive routines.

Praise success with a cheerful tone.

Avoid disciplining accidents.

Be patient.

For more information:

[Toilet Learning | Caring For Kids](#)

Your Child's Speech and Language

Speech and language skills help your child engage in daily activities.

- Music and songs help to develop listening skills.
- The repetitive nature of songs and rhymes helps to develop speech and language skills.



Hearing check:

If a child has a hearing problem, their speech and language can be affected. Hearing loss can be affected by many things including ear infections. If you have concerns about your child's hearing, speak to their health care provider.

For more information about speech, language and hearing:

[SmartStart Hub at Five Counties Children's Centre](#)



Helping your Child with Reading and Writing

Read aloud to your child for at least 15 minutes every day. It is the best way to help them become interested in reading.

Choose the book together.

Enjoy the same book over and over again.

Read a variety of different kinds of books, such as story, fact, poetry, and rhyming books.

Talk about the pictures and ask questions.



How can you help your child learn to print?

Have paper, crayons and markers on hand.

Encourage your child to draw, scribble, copy shapes, and print.

For more information:

[Literacy Resources | SmartStart Hub](#)

[Tips for Talking, Singing, Playing and Reading in the Early Years | Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation](#)

Oral Health is Important

Good oral health plays an important role in our general health.

Help your child care for their teeth by:

Brushing teeth 2 times per day for at least 2 minutes.

- Using a pea-sized amount of toothpaste with fluoride.
- Helping your child to brush their teeth.
- Changing your child's toothbrush every 3 months or when the bristles lose their shape, and after an illness.

Flossing your child's teeth every day.

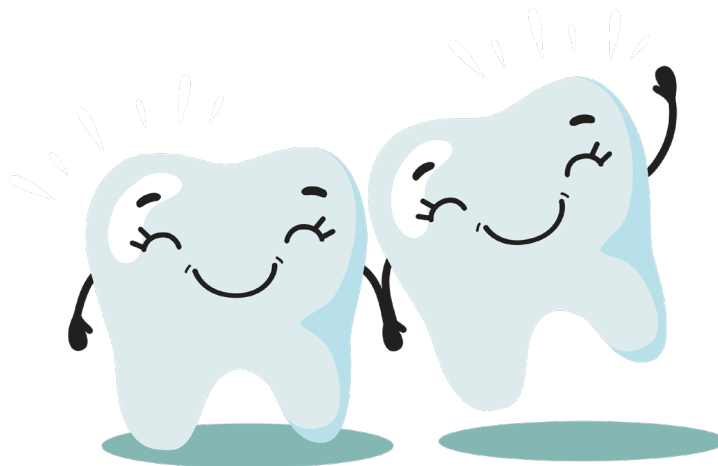
Limiting sugary and sticky snacks (e.g., raisins, fruit leather).

Choosing water to sip during the school day. Limit other drinks to mealtime.

Visiting the dentist every 6-9 months.

Lift the Lip

- Lift up your child's lip often to check for anything on the teeth or in the mouth.
- Look for chalky or brown spots on their teeth.
- If found, contact your oral health professional or public health.



Dental Care and Screening

In-school Screening

Oral health staff visit elementary schools to conduct oral health screening every year. This includes a quick look into the mouth with a sterilized mouth mirror. Findings will be shared with parents. This visual screening does not replace a child's regular visit to the dentist. For more information on this program, see: [Dental Health in Schools | Lakelands Public Health](#)

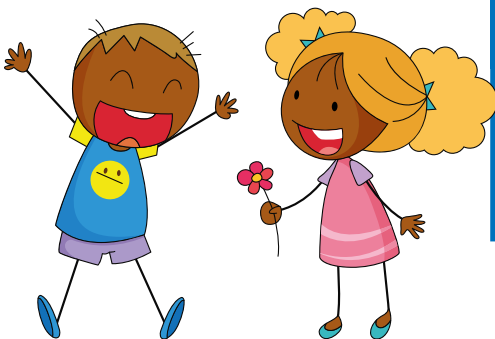
In-school Fluoride Varnish

Some communities do not have fluoride in their water supply. Fluoride helps to prevent tooth decay. Fluoride varnish is provided to JK/SK students in Haliburton, Kawartha Lakes and Northumberland schools. For more information, call 1-844-575-4567 ext. 1247, or see: [Dental Health Clinics | Lakelands Public Health](#)

Dental Care

Free dental care is available for eligible children and youth 17 years of age and under, through the Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO) program.

For more information, call 1-844-575-4567 or visit our website [Dental Health for Children and Youth 0-17 | Lakelands Public Health](#)



For more information:

[Oral Health Tips | Government of Canada](#)

[Flossing and Brushing | Canadian Dental Association](#)

Gear Up for School with an Eye Exam

Annual eye exams are free for school-aged children 19 years and younger with a valid Ontario health card.

Vision problems are common in children. They can impact:

Learning

Social development

Physical or everyday activities



Your child should have an eye exam before starting kindergarten. Repeat eye exams each year. This helps ensure their vision develops well.

For more information about vision:

ontario.ca/childvision

To find an optometrist near you and book an appointment:

[Find an optometrist | College of Optometrists of Ontario](#)

Eye See Eye Learn Program:

Some optometrists participate in the Eye See Eye Learn Program, which provides one pair of cost-free eyeglasses to eligible children who are enrolled in junior or senior kindergarten. To learn more, visit:

[Eye See Eye Learn Program | Ontario Association of Optometrists](#)



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Healthy Habits to Prevent Illness

Teaching your child to wash their hands is an important way to keep them healthy.



Remember:

Handwashing with soap and water is best! Your child could use alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHR) when their hands are not visibly dirty.

Encourage your child to wash hands often. Especially before and after

- eating/drinking
- using the bathroom
- playing on shared equipment or outside
- playing with pets
- and blowing their nose.

Also teach your child to cough and sneeze safely. When you need to cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or with your upper sleeve/elbow. Remember to wash your hands afterwards too.

Lessons to learn about coughing & sneezing:

Teach your child to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when they cough or sneeze.

Teach your child to cough/sneeze into their upper sleeve/elbow.

Put used tissues in the waste basket and have them wash their hands using soap and water or hand sanitizer.

For more information:

[Handwashing for Parents and Children | Caring for Kids](#)

[Common Infections and Your Child | Caring for Kids](#)



Illness and School Attendance

School attendance is critical for wellbeing and learning. It is also important for your child to stay home when they are sick or feeling unwell. These tips can help to decide when a student should stay home or go to school.

When Your Child Can Go to School

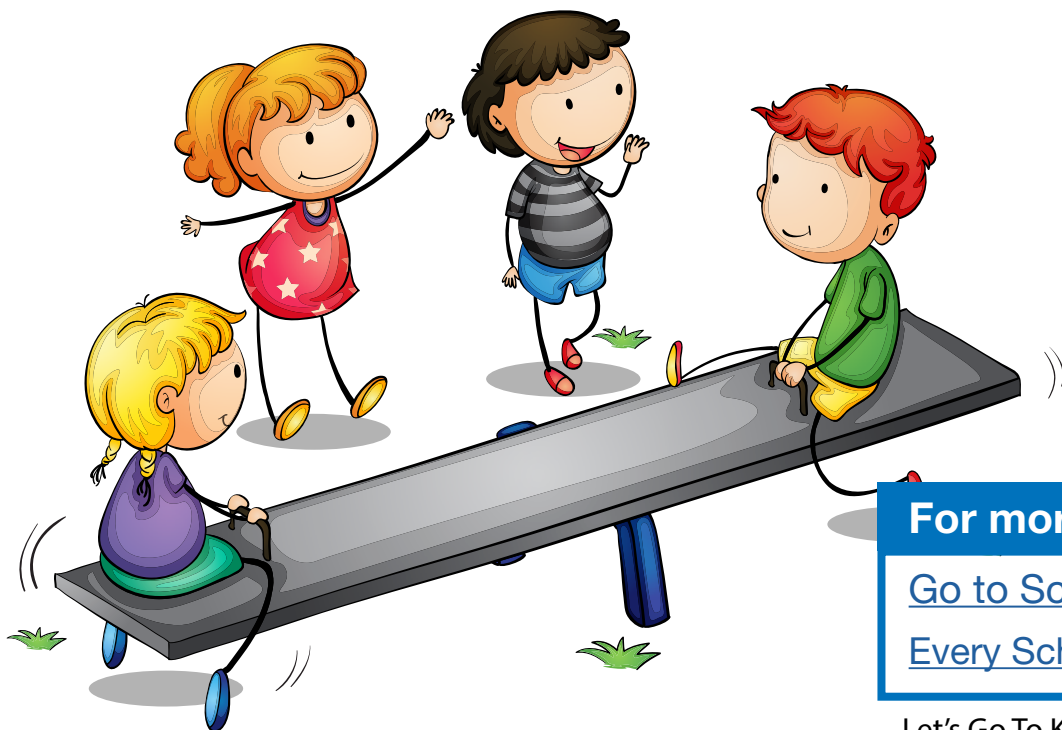
- Runny nose or mild cough, but no other symptoms
- Mild stomach ache
- Mild rash and no other symptoms
- Eye drainage without fever, pain or eyelid redness
- NO fever overnight and NO medicine taken to lower it during that time
- Have not thrown up or had diarrhea in the past 48 hours

When Your Child Should Stay Home

- Fever over 100.4°F (38°C), chills, sore throat, or a new/worse cough
- Throwing up or having diarrhea (watery stool)
- A healthcare provider or public health tells them to stay home due to a known or suspected contagious illness
- Have a known or suspected contagious illness

When They Can Return to School

- Fever-free without the use of fever reducing medication AND symptoms have been improving for 24 hours
- 48 hours after last throw up or diarrhea and feeling well enough to take part in



For more information:

[Go to School or Stay Home](#)
[Every School Day Matters](#)

Stay Connected



If you have questions about these or other topics, please contact us at 1-844-575-4567, visit our website, or visit your closest Lakelands Public Health office.

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