A BOOKLET FOR PARENTS

Learning to Play and Playing to Learn: What Families Can Do







best start
meilleur départ

by/par health nexus santé

What is this booklet about?

Learning to Play and Playing to Learn is a parent resource. It is based on the research of what, how, and when your child learns. This booklet is filled with:

- Up-to-date information
- Helpful tips
- Checklists
- Links to other resources

These tools will help you to support your child's individual growth and development. This will help your child be prepared for learning at school.



Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is for everyone who cares for children.

- ✔ Parents*
- ✔ Guardians
- ✔ Child care providers
- ✔ Health care providers
- ✔ Family members
- ✔ Friends

* We use the term parent to represent all significant caregivers (grandparents, aunts, legal guardian, etc.) in your child's life.

Note: The glossary at the end of this booklet explains many words and concepts that you may not be familiar with.



What does this booklet help parents to learn?

The information and examples in this booklet show you how you can help your child's brain and body grow and thrive. It will also help you feel more confident that your child is prepared for kindergarten and beyond.

Children all learn in different ways and at their own pace. Consider the unique strengths and needs of your own child. The tips, activities and links in this booklet can help you to decide the best way to support your child.

Did you know?

You are your child's greatest educator and role model.

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The journey to school and lifelong learning



Through play, children learn many skills, such as how to interact with others, solve problems, and accept different ways of thinking, long before they start school, or even kindergarten. These skills help children do well in school and in life. Children, who feel good about learning and are eager, curious, and confident when starting school are more likely to:

- Do well in school
- Finish school
- Continue on a journey of lifelong learning

Starting school is a big milestone for you and your child. Kindergarten is the first step in your child's formal education. It is optional and free for all children in Ontario.

With the support of teachers and early childhood educators, kindergarten offers a play-based program. Your child learns through play that:

- Is built on your child's interest and curiosity
- Includes learning experiences directed by teacher and early childhood educator team
- Includes activities where your child can take the lead
- Provides opportunities for your child to explore the world around him with the connections to real life experiences

For more information on the province's full-day kindergarten program, go to the Ministry of Education website at www.edu.gov.on.ca/kindergarten

In this booklet we refer to the teacher and early childhood educator team. They work together throughout the day to help children learn.



What does a full day of kindergarten look, sound and feel like?

Your child will:



Solve problems and tell others about their learning



Have quiet time as needed



Make friends



Be involved in play-based learning



Eat healthy meals and snacks



Listen to stories



Develop and learn skills and concepts, both indoors and outdoors



Use their senses to explore and discover



Learn to get along with other children and adults

How do children learn?

Children learn by playing in places where they feel safe, respected, and loved. Children's early development, health, and learning is shaped by the day-to-day experiences within their family and community.



From the day they are born, children learn and develop by:

- Touching
- Hearing
- Tasting
- Seeing
- Smelling
- Moving
- Doing (for example, playing).

Children's play is children's work. Remember, you are your child's greatest role model!

To learn, children need:

- A secure attachment
- Self-regulation
- Play

Let's find out why these concepts are so important.

Why is a secure attachment important for learning?

A secure attachment is a powerful, emotional bond where a child feels protected by his parents.



A secure attachment is important to learning because it helps a child to:

- Be more confident to explore the world around him.
- Calm himself in stressful situations.
- Develop resilience.

The key ingredient to develop a secure attachment is to respond to your child's distress. You are encouraged to:

- Intervene when your child is in distress.
- Comfort your child when he is distressed.
- React to your child's distress before it gets out of control.
- Respond consistently and warmly to your child's distress.

How can I help my child develop a secure attachment?

Here are some things you can do to:

- Let your child know that you are there when she needs you.
- Guide your child to find the solution to the situation by providing her with options.
- Support your child's learning by playing with her when she is learning a new skill and/or practicing skills she already has.
- Get down to the floor to be at your child's level. This helps you to understand how the world is seen from her view.
- Show and tell your child that you are delighted to see her each time you pick her up from school or child care, when she wakes up in the morning, or at every other opportunity.
- Know your child and respond in the way she enjoys. The most important thing is to know your child is unique.
- Be engaged in your child's day to day activities by following her lead and responding to her needs and cues.
- Spend time with your child observing, playing and learning what your child likes or dislikes.
- Acknowledge your child's feelings by listening to what is said. Use the phrases like:
  "I see."
  "Tell me more."

Feeling safe and secure helps your child:

- Grow and develop in a healthy way.
- Feel safe to explore the world around her through play.
- Think and feel more positively about herself.
- Develop into a confident and curious learner.
- Get along well with others.
- Feel empathy for others.
- Have a good self-image, self-confidence, and good self-regulation.



Why is self-regulation important for learning?

Self-regulation is important for your child to:

- Stay calm, focus and alert when needed.
- Organize feelings and control impulses.
- Develop the ability to tolerate frustration and resist doing something tempting (e.g., taking someone's toy).
- Learn how to behave in different situations (e.g., screaming with joy while running outside, then sitting quietly to listen to a story).

Examples for 0 – 1 year-olds:

You help your baby develop self-regulation by responding to his cues. Cues are signals your baby or child gives through facial expressions, body language, sounds, and crying. When you read these signals and respond to them consistently, your child will begin to learn to regulate his emotions, attention, and behaviour. Be mindful about your non-verbal language. Your baby recognizes your facial expressions.



- The baby pulls his hands to his face or tries to suck on things that touch his cheeks. This shows that he is hungry. You respond by feeding him.



- The baby is smiling at the parent playing with her. This shows that she is still interested in the game. You continue the game as long as your baby smiles and looks at you. If your baby is cooing or gurgling, smile or talk to her to let her know you are there. Your baby likes to hear your voice.

Examples for 1 – 2 year-olds:

Toddlers still need a lot of help to regulate emotions, attention, and behaviour. Toddlers begin to read the cues from parents and respond to them.



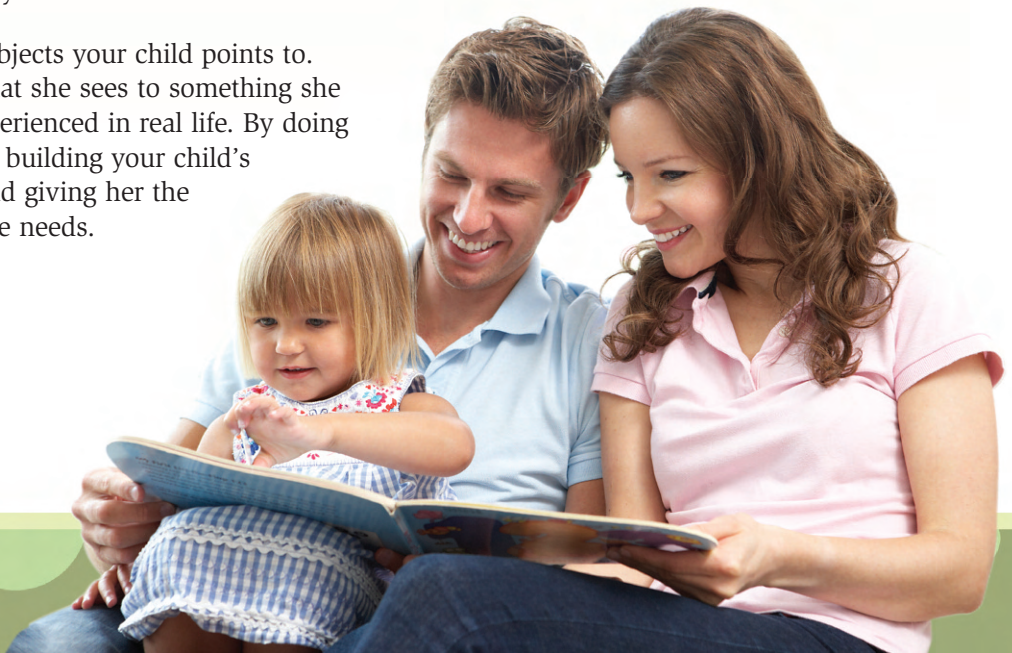
- You may help your toddler who has to wait in line for his turn, by giving an explanation ahead of time, such as, "Your turn comes after Jake's. Everyone gets a turn."



- You may provide your toddler with space and learning experiences to develop his independence. Interfere only when necessary. Allow your toddler to learn, by practicing tasks over and over.

- A toddler shows a toy or book to her parents. When you show interest and look at the book with her, you encourage your toddler's attention. In fact, looking at the same page at the same time and shifting attention from page to page is an important experience for later development. It supports your child's ability to focus when she learns to read.

- Name the objects your child points to. Connect what she sees to something she has just experienced in real life. By doing this you are building your child's language and giving her the attention she needs.



Examples for 2 – 5 year-olds:

Preschoolers begin to self-regulate their emotions, behaviour, and attention. They still need help from adults, but will begin to read the cues given by others who tell them to take turns, share, wait, be friendly, calm down, focus, complete tasks, and work hard at play.



- A preschooler is showing signs of frustration because the puzzle he is working on is hard. You encourage him with a few words such as, "See if this piece fits if you turn it the other way." He will feel happy and proud when the puzzle is finished and will stay focused on what he is doing the next time.

- A preschooler is telling a story about his day at preschool. Even though you are busy, you ask him questions about his day and listen carefully to what he has to share.





Here are some tips to help your child develop self-regulation.

- Allow your child to make choices (e.g., set out two healthy snacks and let your child choose which one he wants).
- Help your child to identify and label emotions. Do this by talking about emotions when playing games, reading books or doing other daily activities.
- Provide a routine so your child knows what happens next.
- Give your child advance notice when you are changing your routine e.g.:
  - "Today after school we are going grocery shopping."
  - "In five minutes we are going outside."
- Give your child reminders before the transition will occur.
- Give directions in a calm voice to help your child with transitions. For example:
  - "First you will put your shoes on and then we will go to the playground."
  - "First we will go to grandma's house and then we will play in the park."
- Model self-control and self-regulation and talk to your child about them, e.g.:
  - "I am upset right now because you spilled your drink, but I am not getting angry. I am counting to ten to help myself stay calm."
- Talk about feelings. Label the emotions for your child so he learns how to express himself when the situation arises. For example when you see your child crying because he just got hurt you can say: "I saw you got hurt and you are sad now. What can we do to make you feel better?" You may offer a hug.

A child with good self-regulation is able to:

- Communicate his needs more appropriately.
- Solve problems and complete tasks more easily.
- Use information from previous experiences to make better choices in a new situation.
- Get along well with others.
- Follow directions more easily.

These skills will help your child when he starts school.



How does a child develop self-regulation?

He learns through your loving and consistent responses and plenty of practice through play!

Why is play important for learning?

Play is the true work of a child. When children play, they learn. For example, when children are lifting, dropping, looking, pouring, bouncing, hiding, building, knocking down, climbing, running, and role playing they are learning.

Through play your child is learning important skills and concepts. Here are some examples:

- She observes when objects are put in water (for example, putting ice cubes in warm water). She talks about what she sees and what happens e.g., cause and effect (science concepts).
- She learns how to sort objects by colour, shapes, size, and use (mathematical and pattern concepts).
- She learns how to find familiar words in signs, retelling stories or printing a list (literacy skills).
- She figures out how to get along with others, making friends, and being respectful (social and emotional skills and concepts).
- She has opportunities to develop thinking skills such as how to recognize and solve problems (inquiry skills).
- She is encouraged to walk, run, hop, throw and catch, and to practice her balance (large and small muscle development, eye-hand coordination skills).

Role playing is really important for your child. When your child role plays, she practices real life situations. Role play helps your child to build:

- Language skills.
- Social skills.
- Imagination.
- Empathy (be more likely to be kind to others).
- Higher levels of thinking and problem solving skills.
- Skills for self-regulation.



Role play is an activity that you and your child can do together. For example, you can:

- Act out a story you have read together.
- Have a tea party with dolls and teddy bears.
- Pretend to be a horse and rider.
- Pretend to go camping, shopping or any other real life experiences.

Younger children play better side-by-side than together. They learn to play with other children, but they will not always cooperate. Children often want exactly what the other child is playing with.

To help your child learn the skills needed to play well with others, provide support and guidance. For example, in a play group, you can say “Let me know when you are done playing with the toy so that another child can have a turn." Offer another toy in exchange.

As you model how to play together, your child learns to share and to take turns.

Physically active play – outdoor and indoor

Healthy habits start earlier than you think. Begin introducing your baby to outdoor time right away. There is no specific temperature that is too high or too cold for a baby to go outdoors. Physical outdoor and indoor activity is part of healthy active living.

Encourage access to active play in nature, outdoors, at home, school, child care and in the community. Playing outside gives your child the freedom to explore, to get dirty and to tumble. When outside he moves more and he has the chance to experiment. He learns to take risks and manage risks.

Being physically active is fun. Being physically active helps children:

- Build strong muscles and bones.
- Develop and grow in a healthy way (e.g., good physical and mental health).
- Develop self-esteem and respect for others.



While being physically active, your child learns many skills such as:

- Eye-hand coordination (e.g., climbing a play structure).
- Large muscle skills (e.g., running).
- Small muscle skills (e.g., picking up a small ball or picking a flower.).

Children aged 2 to 5 years should engage in physically active outdoor and indoor play for at least three hours every day. The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines suggest a progression toward at least 60 minutes of energetic play per day by 5 years of age. For more information go to https://csepguidelines.ca

Physically active play can happen any time during the day as part of play, games, transportation (e.g., walking), or a family activity such as swimming or skating. Your child learns by looking at you and by following your example. Remember you are your child greatest educator and role model. If you are active, she will also be active.

Some examples of how you can include physical active play:



- Put on some music and dance or move around.
- Create an obstacle course with obstacles to crawl under, climb over and run/walk around.
- Go for a walk around your neighbourhood (this helps your child become familiar with nearby parks and schools).
- Roll, throw, catch, and kick balls and other objects of different sizes.
- Go skating or swimming.
- Go to the park, playground or walk in the forest.

So, let your child play! Let your child play outside in various weather conditions such as snow and rain.

Go play with your child! There is nothing in the world your child would rather do than play with you!

How can I play with my child?

Different adults play differently with their children. Parents, family members, and other caregivers all provide different opportunities for your child to play, explore, and learn. You may prefer to play active games or to take your child for a walk to explore outside so he can touch and smell the natural materials. Your partner may prefer to play games with rules. You may like to read to your child while your partner tells stories and acts them out. That is okay. Children need more than one adult in their lives who may all play differently.

Encourage other family members and care providers to play with your child. Just set some clear safety rules for everyone. It also helps, if everyone knows the developmental stage of your child and can play with him according to his age and ability (check out the Looksee Checklist by ndds at https://lookseechecklist.com).

Tips that help you play with your child:

- Engage in your child's play by listening, observing, communicating (label, ask questions, explain, praise your child's accomplishment).
- Try to respond when your child initiates play.
- Actively listen to your child while he is playing.
- Respect your child's interests.
- Get to your child's level (sit with him on the floor).
- Observe what your child is doing before joining his play. This will allow you to engage in his play by following his lead. Talk with him in the language you are most comfortable with. Below are a few examples to develop your child's critical thinking process.
  - "I noticed that you built a garage for your cars. Tell me more about it."
  - "Where do I find the plates for dinner?"
  - "I see that you wrote the names of different foods on your menu. You are a writer!"
  - "Who takes care of the pets when your store is closed?"
  - "I wonder what is going to happen when you place this big block on top of your tower."
- Decide with your child what should be in his play area. For example:
  - Materials that encourage pretend play, such as a variety of items for costumes, stuffed animals and dolls, toy cash register, a variety of toy vehicles, empty food boxes and add plastic jars, play money, etc.
  - Paper, pencils and crayons to help your child develop communication skills.
  - A variety of containers and measuring tools, such as rulers, measuring tapes and simple timers to stimulate his interest in mathematical and scientific concepts.



Photo credit: Simon Blackley (CC)

Talk about the things you have seen together



- Read stories with your child, then re-tell them or act them out.
- Use music to move and dance with your child, or to help him become quiet and calm.
- Respect your child's attention limit according to his age and his development.
- Know when it is time to stop.
- Take your child out for a walk around your neighbourhood or a hike through the park.
- Talk about the things you have seen together, e.g.:
  - "I noticed the birds have built a nest in that tree. I wonder what is inside."
- Pretend play what you have done together (e.g., going to the grocery store).
- Develop a routine so your child has times for active play and times for quiet play.
- Let your child help you with simple chores and talk about them. For example when grocery shopping, let your child pick fruits and vegetables and place them in the bag. To enhance his mathematic skills you can count them together.
- Plan, cook, and prepare food with your child. Let your child try simple tasks in the kitchen (e.g. add ingredients to a bowl).

Provide opportunities for your child to use all his developing skills:

- Large muscle skills – e.g., running, climbing, pulling, pushing
- Small muscle skills – e.g., drawing, painting, catching
- Social skills – e.g., turn-taking, sharing, cooperating, negotiating, initiating interactions
- Emotional skills – e.g., showing feelings, caring
- Language skills – e.g., listening, talking, asking using words, rhyming, singing, telling stories, reading recipes
- Thinking skills – e.g., exploring, investigating, planning, matching, problem-solving.

How can I help my child be prepared for learning at school



Seven very important ingredients for learning are:

1. Plenty of love

Providing your child with plenty of love and responding warmly to her cues.

2. Talking and listening

Your child learns when you talk with her. Singing, rhyming and reading also build her skills. Even before she can speak, she can tell you things through signals or cues. Respond to her and listen to her when she speaks and she will learn how to communicate with you and others. Check your child's speech and language development using the Looksee Checklist at https://lookseechecklist.com

3. Play, play, and more play

Different types of play help your child grow and develop. Spend time playing with your child. That is what she likes best. You can also take her to play groups and programs for families to help your child get used to playing with other children. Read more about play on page 10. Find an **EarlyON** child and family centre near you at www.ontario.ca/page/find-earlyon-child-and-family-centre

4. Daily physical activity

Provide opportunities for physically active play to help your child develop skills, strong bones and muscles, and improve mental health. Read more on page 11.

5. Good nutrition starts in the home

Healthy eating gives your child the building blocks for proper growth and development as well as providing the energy to learn, play, and stay healthy. To learn more about your child's nutrition and school, see pages 16, 18 and 22.

6. Daily routines

Routines make your child feel secure and avoid difficult behaviour. Have daily routines for waking up, eating meals and snacks, going to bed and playing (actively and quietly). Sometimes, the classroom or the school routines need to be adjusted to accommodate a child who has a special need. In daily routines don't forget to include special events, such as birthday parties, outings, or cultural celebrations. To find out more about routines for starting school, go to the routines and self-help quiz on page 20.

7. Regular health and development check-ups

Your child learns best when she feels well, can hear and see well, and is eating healthy food. Health checks and immunizations help keep your child healthy. Any health problem your child may have, should be addressed early, so that she can do well in school. To find out more about your child's health, access the checklists at https://lookseechecklist.com. Also refer to resources for families on pages 23 and 24.

You also help your child learn when you talk with her about school and communicate with her teacher and early childhood education team.

How can I know how my child is doing?

All parents want their children to do the best they can in school and in life. The Looksee Checklist by ndds is an easy to use method of recording the development and progress of your child within certain age groupings. The checklists are not meant to be a substitute for the advice and/or treatment of health care and child care professionals trained to professionally assess the development and progress of your child. There are several checklists for various ages. The checklist asks if your child can do certain things at a certain age in the areas of:

- Vision
- Speech and language
- Small muscles
- Social
- Self-help
- Hearing
- Large muscles
- Thinking and learning
- Emotional

To view the checklist visit https://lookseechecklist.com. Ontario residents can download and photocopy the checklists and tips for free.

Checklists, quizzes & more information

Here are a number of checklists & quizzes that can help you track how your child is doing:

- School related nutrition information
- Vision checklist
- Your child's smile – A dental checklist
- Immunization information
- Routines and self-help checklist
- Parent quiz

If you have concerns or questions about your child's progress contact:

- Your health care provider
- Your local public health unit
- Your community health centre
- Your child's teacher and early childhood educator team
- Your local infant and child development services. For information about infant and child development services and to find a centre near you, go to www.oaicd.ca

School related nutrition information

Find out if your child is a healthy eater and take action to improve eating habits by completing a quick nutrition questionnaire at www.nutritionscreen.ca

The following information will help you provide good nutrition for your child once she starts school

- Provide your child with a healthy breakfast every morning. It offers your child energy and nutrients that her body needs to grow and her brain to learn.
- Your child will likely have to bring two snacks to school and a lunch. For ideas on healthy school lunches and snacks, visit the Dietitians of Canada website at www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/School-Health/Articles/Packing-Healthy-School-Lunches-and-Snacks-FAQs.aspx?aliaspath = %2fen%2fArticles%2fSchool-Health%2fArticles%2fPacking-Healthy-School-Lunches-and-Snacks-FAQs
- Find out about the food allergy policy at your child's school to ensure your child's lunches are allergy-safe. Make sure your child knows not to share food with other children at school.
- Think about the containers and packaging for your child's lunches and snacks. Many schools ask parents to send reusable containers to reduce waste. Make sure your child can open and close the containers in her lunch box. Help your child learn how to open and close her backpack, lunch box and containers.
- Make water the drink of choice. Other healthy drinks for a meal include white (unsweetened low-fat) milk and unsweetened fortified soy beverage. On hot days or school outings, send extra water for your child to drink.
- Make sure your child's food is safe to eat. Use an ice pack in your child's lunch box to keep refrigerated foods cold. Cut foods into small pieces to ensure they are not choking hazards. Teach your child proper hand washing before and after eating.
- When your child returns from school, you can offer a snack, especially if dinner is still some time away. Offer meals and snacks 2 ½ to 3 hours apart.
- Encourage your child to listen to their hunger and fullness cues.
- Be a healthy eating role model by choosing a variety of healthy foods and cooking and eating together as a family.
- Include a variety of different foods in the meals and snacks you send to school with your child. For example, include vegetables and fruits, whole grain foods and protein foods. Go for healthy choices, such as vegetables, fruits or cheese and limit highly-processed foods.

For more information about your child's nutrition or eating habits:

- Call Telehealth Ontario toll free at 1-866-797-0000.
- Ask to speak to the dietitian if you belong to a Family Health Team in Ontario.
- Contact your Public Health Unit. To find the nearest one visit www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx
- Contact your Community Health Centres. To find the nearest one visit www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/chc/locations.aspx
- Ask your health care provider for a referral to a Registered Dietitian (R.D.). The Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) covers the cost of an R.D. in a hospital, family health teams and community health centres.



Vision checklist and information



Children may not know that they have a vision problem. They can't always tell you what they see. One out of 4 children has a significant eye or vision problem that can interfere with learning and development. The Ontario Association of Optometrists recommends that every young child has complete eye examinations at ages 6 months, 3 years and every year thereafter or as recommended by your optometrist.

Does your child have an unusual eye appearance?

- One eye that looks turned in or out?
- Bumps, styes, redness, swelling or crusting of eyelids?
- Drooping eyelid?
- Haziness or whitish appearance inside the pupil?
- Frequently watery eyes?

Does your child behave in a way that could suggest a vision problem?

- Does not watch or follow an object?
- Touches things to help recognize them?
- Does not make eye contact?
- Closes or covers one eye?
- Squints or frowns when looking far or near?
- Rubs or touches the eyes a lot?
- Blinks more than usual?
- Reacts strongly to light?
- Turns or tilts head when viewing objects?
- Holds objects very close to face?
- Dislikes near tasks?
- Loses interest quickly or becomes irritable with visual activities?
- Has poor depth perception or trouble seeing 3D?
- Trips or bumps into things often?
- Is uncoordinated in activities and sports?

Does your child have any difficulties with learning?

- Has poor posture when reading/writing?
- Has poor handwriting?
- Moves head, loses place, skips lines when reading?
- Uses more effort than normal to complete school work?
- Works hard but is not achieving the expected level at school?

Is your child at risk for vision problems?

- Does a family member have a turned or lazy or blind eye?
- Does a family member have glasses?
- Has any family member had early childhood cataracts or glaucoma?
- Were there problems with the pregnancy or delivery?
- Was your child premature at birth?
- Does your child have a hearing loss?
- Does your child have a health condition that can affect eyes, such as:
  - Cerebral palsy
  - Juvenile arthritis
  - Down syndrome
  - Autism
  - Attention deficit disorder (ADHD)
  - Developmental delay

The Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) covers the cost of an annual eye exam for children aged 0-19 years. To find an optometrist, you can call the Ontario Association of Optometrists at (800) 540-3837 or visit www.optom.on.ca for a list of doctors in your area.

Adapted with permission from the Ontario Association of Optometrists

Learn more about free program for junior kindergarten students at www.EyeSeeEyeLearn.ca.

Dental checklist and information

Teach your child healthy dental habits early. Below are helpful oral health tips:



- **Help or supervise your child to brush his teeth twice a day**
  - For your child less than 3 years of age, brush his teeth.
  - For your child from 3 to 6 years of age, you should help him brush his teeth.
  - Talk to your dentist or dental hygienist about the best way to brush your child's teeth.
- **Floss your child's teeth at least once a day**
  - Many cavities start between teeth.
  - Start cleaning between your child's teeth when the teeth are touching.
  - Talk to your dentist or dental hygienist about the best way to floss your child's teeth.
- **Use a pea-sized drop of fluoridated toothpaste for your child age 3 to 6 years of age**
  - Fluoride helps to strengthen the tooth enamel.
  - Make sure your child does not swallow the toothpaste.
  - Talk to your dentist or dental hygienist about the use of toothpaste.
- **Check your child's teeth**
  - Look for dull white spots or lines on the teeth. These may be on the necks of the teeth next to the gums.
  - Dark teeth are also a sign of tooth decay.
  - Make an appointment with a dentist right away if you see these signs.
- **See a dentist to treat your cavities**
  - Bacteria that cause cavities can be passed on to your child.
  - Anything that has been in your mouth should not be put in your baby's mouth.
- **Take your child to see a dentist by 12 months of age or within 6 months of getting his first teeth**
  - Cavities found early can be fixed more easily and cheaply.
  - Only a dentist can perform a complete dental exam, make a diagnosis of tooth decay or other dental disease and prescribe treatment options.
- **Offer healthy beverages**
  - Make water the drink of choice.
  - Offer only water between meals and snacks.
  - Other healthy drinks include white (unsweetened low-fat) milk and unsweetened fortified soy beverage. Offer 2 cups (500 mL) each day.
  - Offer milk or fortified soy beverage in an open cup.
  - Avoid or limit sugary beverages such as juice, pop, iced tea, and sport drinks.
- **Offer healthy snacks**
  - Give your child snacks that include a variety of healthy foods from Canada's Food Guide.
  - Healthy snacks should always include a vegetable or fruit. Try cheese and apples, carrot sticks and hummus, whole grain pita bread triangles and raw veggies with bean dip.
  - Snacking often on sugary, sticky, and starchy snacks will contribute to erosion of the enamel.
  - Keep snacks and meals 2½-3 hours apart.
  - Avoid constant snacking throughout the day.

Immunization information

Vaccination is a safe and effective way to protect your child's health. Visit www.ontario.ca/page/vaccines for more information on vaccines.

In Ontario, children have several vaccinations before they are 2 years old. Children are due for more vaccines between the ages of 4 and 6 years. When your child starts school, all his shots (immunizations) must be up to date. To check which shots your child should have, visit www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/immunization/static/immunization_tool.html

Keep a record of your child's immunizations. Your school or public health unit may ask to see your child's updated immunization records.

If you have questions about your child's immunizations, please call your family doctor or your local public health unit.



Routines and self-help checklist

Use this checklist to establish a healthy daily routine to help your child be prepared for school. Some questions about your child's self-help skills and safety practices are also included.

My child gets up around the same time each morning.	Yes ❍	No ❍
My child has a bedtime routine and usually falls asleep easily at night.	Yes ❍	No ❍
My child sleeps at least 10 hours most nights.	Yes ❍	No ❍
My child has a healthy breakfast each morning.	Yes ❍	No ❍
My child is physically active for at least three hours per day.	Yes ❍	No ❍
My child has a time during the day to play quietly or to have a nap.	Yes ❍	No ❍
My child has no more than one hour of screen time (TV, computer, or video games) per day.	Yes ❍	No ❍
My child can ask an adult for help.	Yes ❍	No ❍
My child knows how to dress herself (except for some buttons, zippers, and ties). *Note: This is more likely for 4 or 5 year olds.*	Yes ❍	No ❍
My child can go to the bathroom without or with little help.	Yes ❍	No ❍
My child knows how to wash her hands.	Yes ❍	No ❍
My child can tell others her full name and her address.	Yes ❍	No ❍
My child knows how to cross the street safely with an adult.	Yes ❍	No ❍
My child knows how she will get to and from school.	Yes ❍	No ❍
My child is familiar with the school, the yard, and the neighbourhood.	Yes ❍	No ❍
My child can open and close lunch and snack containers.	Yes ❍	No ❍
My child can tell others about her activities, outings, or events.	Yes ❍	No ❍

If you answered "no" to any of these questions that does not mean your child is not prepared for school. Just take some time to set routines and practice self-help and safety skills. Try some of the activities listed in this booklet. To help your child get to know other places and people before she starts school you can:

1. Go to programs for parents and young children.
2. Go to your local library, recreation centre, or friendship centre.
3. Take your child to the park, a museum, the grocery store, or for a bus ride.
4. Check with your local school to see if they offer a school readiness program. Ask if they offer a Kindergarten visit before your child goes to school.

For tips to establish a healthy routine for a child aged 25-30 months go to https://resources.beststart.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/K46-E14.pdf

Parent quiz

Now, that we are almost at the end of the booklet, let's review what we have talked about.

1. Children start to learn from the day they are born. **True** ❍ **False** ❍

2. Good nutrition is important for learning. **True** ❍ **False** ❍

3. A secure attachment develops when parents respond warmly to their child's needs and cues. **True** ❍ **False** ❍

4. Self-regulation is a skill that is developed throughout childhood. **True** ❍ **False** ❍

5. Children learn through play. **True** ❍ **False** ❍

6. Active outdoor and indoor play develops children's large and small muscle skills. **True** ❍ **False** ❍

7. Parents can use the Looksee Checklist to see if their child is developing according to his/her age. **True** ❍ **False** ❍

8. Young children prefer to play with other children. **True** ❍ **False** ❍

Answers:

1. **True.** From the day they are born, children learn and develop by: touching, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and doing (e.g., playing).
2. **True.** Seven very important ingredients for learning are: lots of love; talking and listening; play, play, and more play – with you; active play; good nutrition; daily routines including lots of sleep; and regular health check-ups. Refer to www.nutristep.ca/en/pdfs/How-to-Build-a-Healthy-Preschooler-ENG-2015.pdf
3. **False.** A secure attachment develops when parents respond to their child's distress.
4. **True.** Self-regulation is a skill that is developed from infancy through the loving and consistent responses from parents and lots of practice through play!
5. **True.** Children learning when they play.
6. **True.** Being physically active has many benefits. First of all, it is fun. At the same time, children learn a lot of skills such as eye hand coordination, large muscle skills (e.g., running), and small muscle skills (e.g., doing up shoes).
7. **True.** The Looksee Checklists are easy to use checklists to help you track if your child is developing according to his age.
8. **False.** You are your child's favorite toy. There is nothing in the world your child would rather do than play with you!

Resources for families

Growth and Development

Building Resilience in Young Children – Booklet for parents of children from birth to six years
A booklet to help parents and caregivers to boost a child's ability to bounce back from life's challenges and thrive: https://resources.beststart.org/product/k35e-building-resilience-booklet-parents/

Children See, Children Learn
Tips to parent without punishment
www.childrenseechildrenlearn.ca

Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development
The most up-to-date scientific knowledge on early childhood development, from conception to age five. www.child-encyclopedia.com

Healthy Baby Healthy Brain
Information to help support your child's early brain development:
www.healthybabyhealthybrain.ca

Is My Child Growing Well?
Fact sheets and information about your child's growth: www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/is_my_child_growing_well

Looksee Checklist
Quick and easy checklist of a child's development and skills typically observed in children from 1 month to 6 years of age. The checklist requires a "yes" or "no" answer. https://lookseechecklist.com

When Children Speak More Than One Language
As a parent of a child who will learn two or more languages, this guide shares helpful information: https://resources.beststart.org/product/k51e-when-children-speak-booklet/

Health

A Parent's Guide to Vaccination
Learn about vaccination and why it is important to your child's health: www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/parent-guide-vaccination.html

Dental Care for Children
Find important information on how to properly care for your child's teeth.
www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/healthy_teeth_for_children

Immunizations for School Attendance
Information regarding the need for children to be immunized according to Ontario's Immunization Schedule: www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/immunization/static/immunization_tool.html

The Eye See... Eye Learn
A site developed to raise awareness about the importance of having children's eyes checked before starting school: www.eyeseeeyelearn.ca

Nutrition

Canada's Food Guide
https://food-guide.canada.ca/en

UnlookFood.ca
Speak with a dietitian free of charge at 1-866-797-0000. Find expert guidance information about everyday eating. www.unlockfood.ca

How to Build a Healthy Preschooler (3-5 years)
An educational resource part of the NutriSTEP® Program: https://opha.on.ca/getmedia/0e558a91-3565-443e-ba76-fd3d5210c686/ERBA-3-5-2018.pdf.aspx

Parents' Support

Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP Canada)
Provides information and support for parents: www.parentsmatter.ca

Canadian Child Care Federation
Resources for parents with practical tips on how to manage the early years: www.cccf-fcsge.ca/parents or call 1-800-858-1412

Canadian Paediatric Society
Information about your child's growth and development, health, safety, and more: www.caringforkids.cps.ca

EarlyON child and family centres.
Free drop-in programs for children from birth to 6 years old. You can learn and play with your child, meet people or get advice.
www.ontario.ca/page/find-earlyon-child-and-family-centre

ConnectABILITY
A website and virtual community dedicated to lifelong learning and support for people who have an intellectual disability, their families and support networks. The site is organized by age group.
http://connectability.ca/category/kids/

Dad Central
A website with useful tips, resources, information to learn more about fathers' roles in the lives of their children: www.dadcentral.ca & www.newdadmanual.ca

Government of Ontario
A website with programs and services including information on early childhood:
www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/index.aspx or call 1-866-821-7770

Your Local Public Health Units
Find your local public health unit:
www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx

Play

9 Healthy Schools Initiatives Every Parent Should Know About
Offers you a summary of key initiatives from the Ministry of Education that impact your children at school and beyond: www.ophea.net/schoolandhome

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines
View Canadian Guidelines on physical activity and ways to be more active: https://csepguidelines.ca/

Daddy and Me On the Move
Aimed at fathers of children aged 0 to 6, fathers will find activities they can do with their children:
https://resources.beststart.org/product/k57e-daddy-and-me-on-the-move-booklet/

Have a Ball Together!
Helps you find all the tools you need to promote and encourage physical activity for children 0-6:
http://haveaballtogether.ca

Is Your Child Safe? Play Time
Health Canada has produced this guide to provide you with information to create a safer play experience and to make safer choices when selecting toys for children:
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/child-enfant/play-jeu-eng.php

ParticipACTION
Offers information to sit less and move more:
www.participaction.ca

Why Play?
A series of brochures offering information to parents and caregivers on play and child development:
www.welcomehere.ca/index.cfm?fuseaction = page.viewpage&pageid = 939

Preparing for School

Ontario Ministry of Education
Information on full-day kindergarten and the many things that you can do at home to prepare and support your child for school:

Full-Day Kindergarten
www.edu.gov.on.ca/kindergarten/index.html

How can I prepare my child? www.edu.gov.on.ca/kindergarten/howcanipreparemychild.html

Glossary

Word(s)	Definition
Attachment	Attachment is a powerful, emotional relationship that develops between children and the important caregivers in their lives. Children can develop secure or insecure attachments with their caregivers.
Child-lead play	Play is led by the child when he explores the world around him with the active presence of his parents or caregiver.
Cue	A cue is a signal to indicate what the child wants or needs at that moment. Cues are not words, but other ways of communicating, such as behaviour (e.g., fidgeting), body language (e.g., yawning), facial expressions (e.g., smiling), and sounds (e.g., crying).
Immunization	Immunizations help a person's immune system fight a disease such as measles or the flu that can be caught from others. From the age of two months, children in Ontario receive a number of immunizations to prevent them from getting diseases that can make them sick or cause long-term problems.
Large muscle skills	The ability to use the large muscles of the body in order to stand up, walk, run, pull, push, and balance.
Language skills	These skills include speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
Literacy skills	These skills enable a child to read and write. Scribbling, drawing, looking at books, and pretend reading are also called pre-literacy skills.
Quiet time	Time that children spend each day in quiet play, usually at the same time each day. They may not need a nap, just some quiet time to play with quiet toys or look at books.
Resilience	Resilience is the ability to steer through serious life challenges and find ways to bounce back and to thrive.
Self-regulation	Self-regulation is how we adjust our feelings, actions, attention, thoughts and bodies so that we can handle different situations without getting overwhelmed. Children learn to self-regulate through their daily interactions with caring adults.
Self-help skills	There are five major types of self-help skills: eating, dressing, grooming, toileting, and household skills (e.g., putting toys away or opening and closing a door).
Small muscle skills	These are skills that involve the use of the small muscles of the hand, fingers, and thumb, usually in coordination with the eyes (e.g., grasp a rattle, hold a pencil, or pick up objects).
Social skills	These are skills which enable children to interact and communicate with other people. Social skills consist of behaviours that people learn in order to get along with others.

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