

Kindergarten is starting soon... Is your child ready?





# Starting kindergarten

The first day of school is an important event in a child's life. Parents eagerly await and prepare for this day.



Good health helps children succeed in school. Help your child develop good health habits early.

Take the time to meet your child's school nurse if your child has special health needs or will require medication. It is also good to know your school's medication and other health policies.

**Your school nurse is** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone number** \_\_\_\_\_

The Iowa Department of Public Health has prepared this booklet to give you current health information.



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## Table of Contents

Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ .....4-5

Healthy Smiles .....6-7

Health Insurance .....8-9

Child Health Centers .....9

Child Care .....10-11

Good Health Care .....12-13

Your Child's Self-Esteem .....14-15

Keeping Safe .....16-17

Going to School for the First Time ...18

Are You Ready? .....19



## Eat Smart. Play Hard.™

Now that your child is going to school, healthy eating and exercise are very important so he will be ready to do well at school.



### **Be sure your child has breakfast every morning.**

- Choose at least one food that has protein (like milk, cheese, yogurt, eggs, or peanut butter).
- Provide a whole grain bread or cereal often.
- Provide a fruit, vegetable, or 100% juice.
- Don't have time for breakfast? Your school may offer breakfast. Income guidelines allow some children to have free or low cost meals.

### **Plan for healthy lunches.**

- Check out the school lunch menus and cost. The school lunch may cost less than packing a lunch and includes a variety of healthy foods.
- Keep refrigerated foods cold by freezing sandwiches the night before or include a cold pack or frozen beverage.
- If you decide to pack a lunch, include a variety of foods, especially fruits, vegetables, and whole grain bread or crackers.



**Choose a healthy snack.** Children need a healthy snack between lunch and dinner. Some healthy snacks are:

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Cheese
- Peanut butter
- Whole grain bread
- Crackers
- Cereal

**Allow time for play.** Children need 60 to 90 minutes of physical activity every day. Taking a walk or playing together can help you and your child feel better physically and mentally.

**Check school policies.** Find out your school's policies about lunches, recess time, and physical education class. Children should have at least 20 minutes to eat and time for physical activity every day at school.

**What if your child is overweight or at risk of becoming overweight?** If you are concerned about your child's weight, the first thing you should do is talk with your pediatrician, family doctor or registered dietitian. Work with your health care professional to decide if your child is overweight and determine the healthiest weight goal.





## Healthy Smiles

(Smiles are important!)

**Healthy teeth are important to a child's overall health and normal growth.** Most

children have a full set of baby (primary) teeth by school age. Around age 6, the first

permanent molars come in behind the last primary molars. Also at this age, the baby teeth will start to be replaced by permanent teeth. If teeth are not taken care of at an early age, children may suffer needless pain and have difficulty sleeping, eating, talking, and learning.



**Clean your child's teeth every day.** Plaque is a soft, sticky layer of germs that is always forming on teeth and gums. Tooth decay (cavities) and gum disease are caused by plaque. To remove plaque:

- Use a small amount of fluoride toothpaste (pea-sized) on a soft-bristled brush.
- Brush teeth at least twice a day, once in the morning and always at bedtime. Children need help with brushing until age 6 or 7.
- Floss teeth once a day. Children need help with flossing until age 8 or 9.



### **Good food choices keep teeth healthy.**

A well-balanced diet helps develop strong teeth and healthy gums. Some foods (sugars and starches) produce strong acids that can cause tooth decay (cavities). If your child eats a lot of sugars and starches, she will be more likely to get cavities.

- Limit the number of times that sweets are eaten each day.
- Avoid sticky foods that stay on the teeth longer.
- Encourage your child to drink plenty of water.
- Choose cheese, yogurt, fruits, and vegetables for snacks.

**Get regular check-ups.** Regular dental check-ups are important for healthy teeth. It is better for the child and less costly to prevent a dental problem than to repair it. Regular dental visits should begin around 12 months of age. Regular visits help to identify dental disease or developmental problems.

### **The dentist may also offer preventive services such as fluoride and sealants.**

**Fluoride** strengthens tooth enamel and makes teeth more resistant to acid attacks.

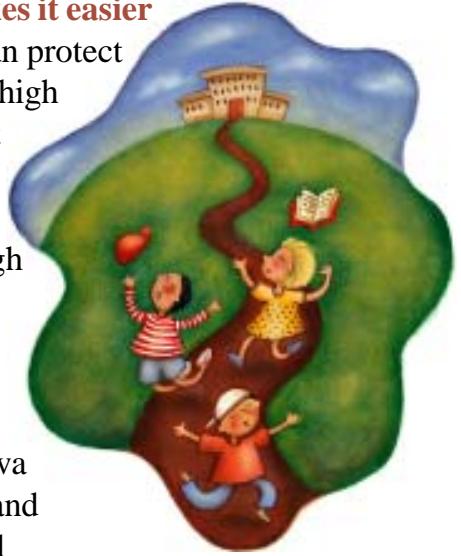
**Sealants** are a plastic material that protects the grooves and chewing surfaces of the permanent back teeth from decay.



# Health Insurance

**Health insurance helps people pay medical and dental expenses and makes it easier for them to see a doctor.**

It can protect people from having to pay very high medical bills. Many people get health insurance through work. Other people buy their own health insurance or get it through public programs.



**Does your child need health insurance?** There are two publicly funded programs in Iowa that can help, *hawk-i* (Healthy and Well Kids in Iowa) or Medicaid (Title 19).

***hawk-i* (Healthy and Well Kids in Iowa).** This program offers low-cost or no-cost health and dental insurance for children in families with incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid, but too low to afford private family coverage. To get *hawk-i* a child must:

- Be under age 19.
- Have no other insurance.
- Be in a family that meets income limits.

You cannot get *hawk-i* if you qualify for Medicaid or your child is a dependent of a State of Iowa employee. For more information about *hawk-i*, call 1-800-257-8563. You can apply online at [www.hawk-i.org](http://www.hawk-i.org).





**Medicaid (Title 19).** Medicaid is a program that pays for covered medical and dental care costs for low-income people who qualify. This insurance is offered at no cost.

If you have questions about where to apply, call the **Healthy Families Line** at **1-800-369-2229**.

## Child Health Centers

If your insurance does not cover well child visits or has a very large deductible that prevents you from getting the care your child needs, you may qualify for services at a Child Health Center. The Iowa Department of Public Health sponsors local Child Health Centers supported by Title V (5) of the Social Security Act. These Centers provide service or referral to child health services for children and youth ages 0 to 21 in many Iowa communities. These services are offered to low-income families on a sliding fee scale.

Call the **Healthy Families Line** at **1-800-369-2229** to find the location of a child health center near you.





## Child Care

You may still need child care even though your child will be in school. Here are steps for choosing child care:

### Interview caregivers.

Call and ask:

- Is there an opening for my child?
- How much does care cost?  
Is financial help available?
- How many children are in your care? What age group do you have?
- What are the hours and days are you open?
- When can I visit?



### Visit and look for:

- Responsive, nurturing interactions between caregivers and children.
- Children who are happily involved in activities.
- Clean and safe indoor and outdoor settings (areas for naps, meals, and toileting).
- A variety of toys and learning materials.
- Children getting individual attention.
- A license, accreditation, or other certification.



### **Visit and ask:**

- Can I visit my child any time?
- How do you handle discipline?
- What do you do if a child is sick?
- How will emergencies be handled?
- May I have a list of parents who have used your care?
- What kind of training and experience do staff and substitutes have?

### **Check references.** Ask other parents:

- Is the caregiver reliable on a daily basis?
- Did your child enjoy the child care experience?
- If their child is no longer with this caregiver, why did you leave?
- Is the caregiver respectful of your values and culture?
- Would you recommend this caregiver or program without reservation?

### **Make the decision.** From what you heard and saw, ask yourself:

- Which caregiver or program should I choose so that my child will be happy and secure?
- Can this caregiver or program meet special needs for my child's care?
- Do the caregiver's or program's values seem to fit with my family's?
- Is the child care suitable and affordable?
- Do I feel good about this decision?

### **Stay Involved.**



## Good Health Care

**Well child check-ups.** Your child should have a physical exam once every year. The well child check-up should include:

- Health history
- Head-to-toe exam without clothes
- Dental, vision, and hearing checks
- Questions about development
- Immunizations (shots)
- Nutrition counseling
- Health education
- Blood lead test



**Immunizations protect children.** Immunizations are shots given to infants and children at different ages to help keep them from developing dangerous childhood diseases. Making sure your child receives immunizations when scheduled is the best way to help protect your child.

Find out if your child has the immunizations needed to start school or if she needs any follow-up shots or if new vaccinations have been recommended.

### **Here is a list of required immunizations:**

- **Hep B** is to prevent hepatitis B
- **DtaP and DTP** protect against pertussis (whooping cough), diphtheria, and tetanus (lockjaw)
- **DT** protects against tetanus and diphtheria



- **Hib** protects against the Hib disease (Haemophilus influenzae type b)
- **IPV** is for polio prevention
- **MMR** is for measles, mumps, rubella (German measles)
- **Var** (Varicella) is used to prevent chickenpox

**Hand washing keeps the germs away!** One of the most important things you can do to keep from getting sick is wash your hands. By washing your hands often, you wash away germs that you have picked up from other people, or surfaces, animals, or animal wastes. By teaching your children to wash their hands, you will help them to stay healthy, too.

Here's how:

- Wet your hands with warm, running water.
- Add soap and rub your hands together, front and back, between fingers and under nails for about 20 seconds. Rinse.

In public restrooms:

- Rinse. Dry your hands with a clean paper towel.
- Turn off water with used paper towel(s) before throwing it away.

### **Tips to help your child stay healthy...**

- Help your child choose healthy foods (pages 4-5).
- Encourage your child to get at least one hour of physical activity every day.
- Have your child on a regular sleep schedule.

**Prevent the spread of germs by covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue or your upper sleeve!**



## Your Child's Self Esteem

**Help your child gain confidence.** Confidence will help your child's self esteem which will be important during times when many changes are occurring.

Here are some ways you can help build your child's confidence:

- Praise and recognize your child when he does something well.
- Use positive statements such as "I like the way you..." or "You are getting better at that."
- Show your child how to handle frustration and emotions with your own positive behaviors.
- Teach your child how to make decisions and recognize when he has made a good decision.
- Show your child that you can laugh at yourself. A sense of humor is important for their well-being.
- Offer help to others. Helping others also makes you feel good about yourself.



**Spend quality time together.** Work, household chores, and social activities all put a strain on the time you can spend with your child. It is really important to spend quality time together. Remember, it is not how much time we spend with our families, but it is how the time is spent that is important.



### **Here are some tips on how you can spend quality time with your child:**

- Eat meals together.
- Do household chores together. Make it fun.
- Do physical activities together. Go for a walk or a bike ride.
- Talk with your child about her day.
- Read to your child. Reading to your child helps develop his own language and reading skills.

### **Find ways for your child to be with other children.**

Children learn from interacting with others. Here are some ways your child can spend time with other children:

- Join a play group. Find or start a play group in your area. Talk to other families with young children and plan regular or informal playtimes.
- Take your child to reading time at your local library or bookstore.
- Be a part of your community. Become involved with activities and organizations with your child.



### **Privacy and individuality.**

- Children should have and be responsible for a place to call their own.
- Help your child recognize and value his own strengths and unique qualities.



## Keeping Safe

**Use a safe car seat.** Iowa law requires children to ride in a child safety seat or a booster seat through the age of 5 years. Children ages 6 through 10 years must ride in a booster seat or a seat belt. Visit the Child Passenger Safety Network web site at [www.blankchildrens.org](http://www.blankchildrens.org) for more information.

**Bicycles, scooters, skateboards, and in-line skates.** Your child should wear a helmet when riding a bicycle, scooter, skateboard, or in-line skates. She should also know bicycle riding laws and rules of the road.



**Water safety.** Here are some tips to help your child be safe in, on, and around water:

- Always watch your child when she is around water.
- Do not use substitutes. Flotation devices and inflatable toys cannot replace parental supervision or double as an approved life jacket.
- Enroll your child in a “learn to swim” course.
- Know CPR.

**Street safety. Teach your child to...**

- Use crosswalks and cross with pedestrian signals.
- Stop at the curb and look both ways before crossing
- Get on and off buses in full view of the driver.
- Not play in or near the street.
- Always watch for traffic.

Children under age 10 should not be allowed to cross the street alone.





### **Poison prevention.**

- Keep paints, cleaning products, beauty products, and medicines out of sight and out of reach.
- Buy products with child-resistant packaging.
- Be sure medicines have safety caps.
- Keep the Iowa Poison Control number near your phone, (1-800-222-1222) and call right away in case of poisoning.
- Your home probably has lead-based paint if it was built before 1960. Call the Iowa Department of Public Health at 1-800-972-2026 to find out how to keep your child from becoming lead-poisoned.

### **Play.** Teach your child these playground safety tips:

- Don't run, push, shove, or fight.
- Take turns on playground equipment.
- Use all playground equipment properly.
- Avoid wearing clothing or jackets with drawstrings.

### **Fire.**

- Don't play with matches or lighters.
- Test smoke detectors and change batteries regularly.
- Have a planned escape route and practice it with your children in case of a fire.

### **Strangers and other safety tips.**

- Never leave a child home alone.
- Teach your child how to answer the phone and rules for answering the door.
- Teach your child when they should call 9-1-1.
- Talk to your child about strangers. Teach them about situations they may be in at some point and how to react to these situations.



# Going to School for the First Time

(Getting ready for the big day!)

**Prepare your child for the first day of school.** Discuss what the school day will be like. Talk about the things your child might do this year. Talk about opportunities, friends, and activities. Here are some tips to help your child prepare for the big day:

- Help your child become familiar with her new school and the neighborhood.
- Talk to your child about starting school. Listen to your child's questions, concerns, and expectations.
- Get your child into a regular sleep schedule. If your child has gotten used to staying up late and sleeping in, do not wait until the day before school starts to begin an "early-to-bed, early-to-rise" routine.
- Teach your child his full name, home address, parents names and phone number.
- At kindergarten round-up, find out what skills your child should have before starting kindergarten. Spend time before school starts working on those skills.
- Before the first day, try to meet your child's teacher. Walk with your child through the school and playground area.



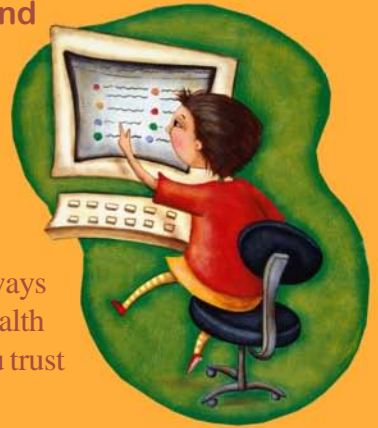


**Preparing yourself:** You have reached a huge milestone in your child's growing up...the first year of school! This is an exciting time, but it can also be stressful for you. Here are some suggestions to help you and your child make this a big, exciting event!

- Start early to get school entry paperwork ready (such as immunization records). Share information with the school nurse about any health concerns.
- Meet your child's teacher and share information with the teacher about your child's likes and dislikes.
- Don't let your child hear you say things like "I'm losing my baby" (even if you feel that way). Always say good things about school.
- Above all, keep a positive attitude! If your child sees that you are excited, he will be excited as well! A positive attitude now will serve him well for years to come!

# Web Sites for Families

**The Internet provides information and resources for families.** If you do not have access to the Internet at home, you can use your local public library, community center, and some coffee shops. Ask friends, family, and professionals for other sites they find useful. Information found on the Internet should be used as a guide. Families should always use their own good judgment. Consult your health care provider, your school nurse, or others you trust if you have any questions or concerns.



- Early Childhood Iowa ([www.earlychildhoodiowa.org](http://www.earlychildhoodiowa.org)) provides resources to Iowa families in the areas of early care, health and education.
- Bright Futures ([www.brightfutures.org](http://www.brightfutures.org)) provides parents and professionals with information to promote health and prevent diseases.
- Child Passenger Safety Network ([www.blankchildrens.org](http://www.blankchildrens.org)) serves as a resource for parents, caregivers and children on how to prevent unintentional injuries.
- Family Village ([www.familyvillage.wisc.edu](http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu)) provides information and resources caring for children with disabilities.
- Iowa Women's Health Information Center ([www.womenshealthiowa.info](http://www.womenshealthiowa.info)) provides information on child care, mental health, safety, and much more.
- Iowa Department of Public Health ([www.idph.state.ia.us](http://www.idph.state.ia.us)) Provides links to programs that promote and protect the health of all Iowans.
- Kidshealth ([www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)) educates parents, children and professionals on dealing with feelings, growing up, school, etc.
- Team Nutrition's Parents Place ([www.fns.usda.gov/Parents/index.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/Parents/index.htm)) provides fun and informative nutrition activities parents can do with their kids.

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