

Tips for a healthy school year

Students are most likely to get sick when school starts because being at school put children's immune systems to the test, offers The Mayo Clinic. Young children who are in close proximity to others in large groups tend to spread organisms like bacteria and viruses that cause illness. Breaking the cycle can take some work, but it's possible to make this a healthy school year.

Encourage handwashing

Frequent handwashing is a great way to prevent illness. Handwashing habits are essential for school-aged children and should be taught as soon as possible. Children should wash their hands after they use the bathroom and before they eat. If they've been playing outside or have interacted with children who are sick, handwashing can help remove some of the germs lingering on their hands.

Antibacterial wipes are another option, but they may not be as effective as washing hands with warm, soapy water.

Stop (some) sharing

Sharing develops good manners and can foster new friendships. But children should be discouraged from sharing food, drinks and other personal items. Once the item has been placed in a child's mouth, it should not be shared.

Take a sick day

Rare is the student who will never come down with an illness. When kids get sick, keep them at home. Schools may have guidelines indicating when it is acceptable for children to return to school, and it's important that parents adhere to those guidelines so illnesses cannot spread around the school.

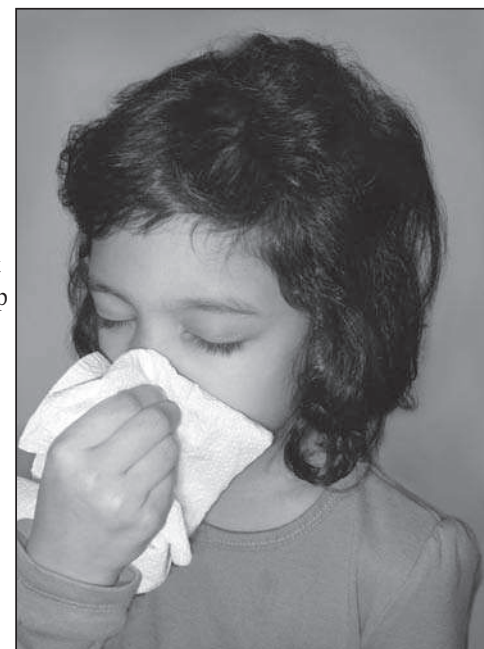
Promote adequate sleep and nutrition

While adults may need between seven and nine hours of sleep a night, children often require more. The National Sleep Foundation recommends eight to 13 hours of sleep a night for school-aged children. Begin adjusting sleep schedules during the latter part of summer vacation so that children can readjust to their regular sleep schedules.

Parents also should feed kids nutritious diets consisting of a variety of foods. Avoid high-calorie junk foods, reserving such items only as special treats every so often.

Donate cleaning supplies

Some schools may be underfunded and may not have enough supplies to keep all of the classrooms and surfaces clean. Parents can help by donating cleaning wipes and sprays so



that students and teachers can thrive in clean, healthy environments

School bus safety tips to impart to youngsters

Each day thousands upon thousands of children board school buses to take them to and from school. Parents and caregivers entrust their children's well-being to the care of school bus drivers and aides. Although parents may worry about school bus accidents, such accidents are few and far between. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration advises that school buses are designed to be safer than passenger vehicles in avoiding crashes and protecting against injury. Buses are arguably the safest mode of transportation for getting kids to and from school. By keeping millions of cars off the roads surrounding schools, school buses

contribute to less crowded roadways, which are less conducive to accidents.

Danger zone

Though parents may feel buses are most likely to be in accidents while in transit, experts advise that children are more likely to get hurt during pickups and drop-offs when they're in the "danger zone" of the bus. The danger zone is a 10-foot radius around the outside of the bus. Bus drivers and other motorists find kids in the danger zone are more difficult to see, and children can get struck by either the bus or oncoming cars that fail to stop when the bus is picking kids up or dropping them off.

Knowing the safety rules

While a large part of protecting children is on the shoulders of the school bus driver, it is also vital for passengers to learn the basics of school bus safety. Kindergarteners or children who are riding the bus for the first time should be taught the rules of school bus safety.

Some schools offer a school bus tour prior to the new school year. This lets youngsters acclimate themselves with the look and feel of the school bus. This introduction also may include information about bus safety, but parents can also educate their children (and themselves) about using caution in and around the bus by following these guidelines.

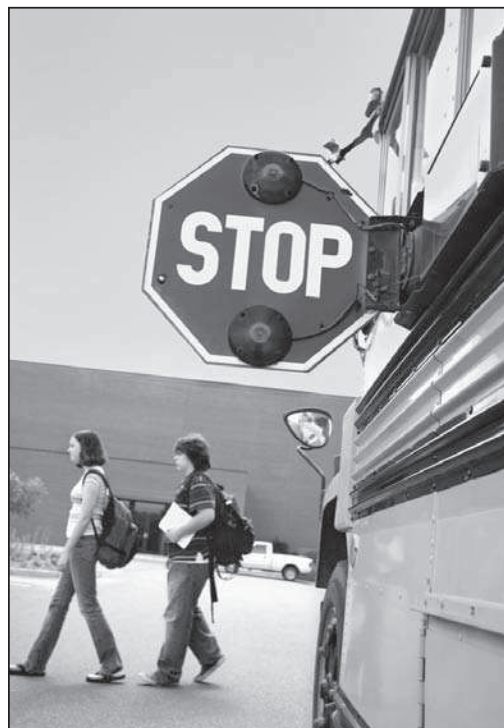
- Get to the bus stop 5 to 10 minutes prior to the assigned pickup time. Rushing last-minute can lead to injury, especially if you're chasing down the bus.
- Remain on the sidewalk or grass at the bus

stop. Do not step off the curb into the street until the bus has arrived and is completely stopped.

- When boarding the bus, go directly to a seat and sit down. Buckle up if there are seatbelts on the bus.
- Remain seated while the bus is in motion.
- Keep voices low so as not to distract the driver.
- Keep your head and hands inside of the bus, and never hang out of the window.
- Do not throw things on the bus or play rough with friends or classmates.
- Keep the aisle clear at all times.
- Be careful when getting off the bus. Hold on while going down the stairs.
- Only get off at your designated stop unless you have permission to get off elsewhere.
- When exiting the bus, walk at least 10 steps past the front of the bus and cross in front where the driver can see you. Do not cross

behind the bus.

- Wait for the driver to give you a signal that it is safe to cross. Be sure to check that all cars on the road have come to a complete stop.
 - Get to the sidewalk or off the street as quickly as possible.
 - If you've forgotten something on the bus, do not run back and attempt to retrieve it. The driver might not see you and start the bus. Rather, call the bus company and see if you can pick it up at another time.
 - Do not get into the cars of strangers waiting around bus stops, even if they offer to take you home.
- Parents can arrange to meet with bus drivers so that they will recognize their faces. Adults also can encourage schools to host bus safety courses to further ensure their youngsters are safe.



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