

# BACK<sup>2</sup>SCHOOL CHECKLIST



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From setting sleep schedules to getting shots, parents should begin preparing now so their children will be off to a healthy start before the first day of school. Follow these tips to help your students make the grade when classes resume.

## Backpack Safety ✓

Backpacks are designed to distribute their weight across some of the body's strongest muscles, according to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. But if over-packed, North Oaks Physical Therapist Annie Schmitt warns that injury to muscles and joints can occur and lead to severe back, neck and shoulder pain. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children should carry no more than 10 to 20 percent of their body weight in their backpacks.



To prevent injury:

- Choose a lightweight backpack with two wide, padded shoulder straps, a padded back and a waist strap.
- Use both shoulder straps, and tighten them.
- Organize and pack light.
- Remove items no longer needed.
- Lift properly. Bend at your knees and lift with your leg muscles, not your back and waist. Avoid twisting or rotating your spine.
- Build up your muscle strength.

Encourage your child to tell you about any pain or discomfort when wearing their backpack so that you can address it with a health care provider and the school, if necessary.



## Sleep Schedule ✓

If you've relaxed your children's bedtime for the summer, gradually get them back on track by moving bedtime up 15 minutes a night.

A recent survey by the National Sleep Foundation found that 60 percent of children under the age of 18 complained of being tired during the day, and 15 percent of children reported falling asleep at school.

The National Sleep Foundation recommends the following nightly sleep guidelines:

- 11-13 hours of sleep for 3 to 5 year olds
- 10-11 hours of sleep for 5 to 12 year olds
- 9-plus hours for teens.

## Hygiene ✓

Proper personal hygiene techniques can go a long way toward protecting you and your children from not only the common cold, but also viruses like the flu and even bacterial infections like staph. The increasing presence of an antibiotic-resistant strain of staph has renewed focus on cleanliness and stopping germs from spreading. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) encourages consistent practice of the following good health habits:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners also are effective.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Practice other, good health habits. Get plenty of sleep, exercise, manage stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food.

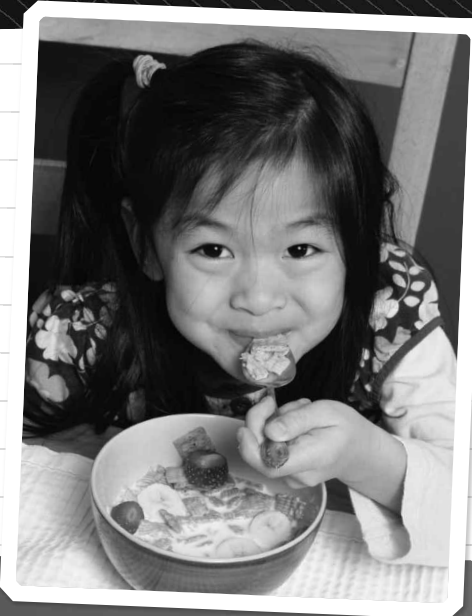


## Drug Abuse Prevention ✓

Confront questions your children may have about drug abuse with straight talk. As a child matures, parents should be mindful of outward signs of drug abuse, including a sudden change in behavior or personality, falling grades or a new crowd of friends.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the use of "traditional" illegal narcotics, such as marijuana, has declined among adolescents and teens, replaced instead by prescription drugs. NIDA notes that some of the most dramatic increases in first-time prescription drug abuse are among 12 to 17 year olds. Prescription drugs have appeal because they are easily accessible (right in the medicine cabinet), perceived as safe when compared to street drugs, and normally prescribed by a doctor and FDA-approved. Ritalin, weight loss medication and other amphetamines are among the most abused, the majority of those who use them seeking to lose weight or an energy boost to "cram" for an exam rather than "get high."

If your child takes prescription medication under the direction of a health care provider, make sure that he or she is aware that misuse can result in severe illness and even death. Also, be sure that your child knows to never give pills to friends.



## Healthy Meals ✓

Children who are nutritionally fit are more likely to have the energy and self-esteem to learn.

Never skip breakfast. North Oaks Medical Nutrition Therapist Virginia Pelegrin cites a new American Dietetic Association study, which found that children who include ready-to-eat cereals in their daily routine are more likely to have a healthier body mass index. Other options include yogurt mixed with cereal and fruit, a cereal bar with a glass of milk, or a piece of fruit or peanut butter sandwich with a glass of milk.

Review your child's school lunch menu with him or her. Also, be sure to alert the school of any food allergies your child may have.

If you pack your child's lunch, plan nutritious and easily prepared meals, like sandwiches, raw vegetables, string cheese, fruit, pudding and juice boxes.

Provide your child with the energy needed for an extracurricular activity or homework with an after-school snack. Ready-to-eat fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy foods should do the job.

In short, a child's daily diet should include items from every group—grains, vegetables, fruit, protein, and dairy. You can get more information on the recommended daily requirements at [www.myplate.gov](http://www.myplate.gov).

## Immunizations ✓

### Immunization Requirements

The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) wants to remind parents that their back-to-school checklist should include making sure their child has an up-to-date shot record.

State law requires that children 4 years old and older who are entering kindergarten, pre-kindergarten, daycare or Head Start programs must have received a booster dose of Poliovirus vaccine, two doses of Measles, Mumps, Rubella vaccine, three doses of Hepatitis B vaccine, two doses of the chicken pox vaccine and a booster dose of Diphtheria Tetanus vaccine. Also, children who are 11 years old or are entering the sixth grade must have proof of all age-appropriate immunizations, including a new bacterial meningitis vaccine requirement.

For more information on vaccine requirements, speak with your child's health care provider or visit the DHH website at [www.dhh.louisiana.gov](http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov) or call:

- North Oaks Family Medicine Clinic in Hammond at (985) 230-5800
- North Oaks Family Medicine - Medical Center Campus at (985) 230-1850
- North Oaks Primary Care Clinics in Independence at (985) 878-4174 or in Livingston at (225) 686-4930.

### Flu Shot Recommendations

The flu is a serious, contagious disease that can lead to hospitalization and even death. The CDC recommends that people get their seasonal flu vaccine as soon as the vaccine becomes available in their community.

The 2013 & 2014 Influenza vaccine will cover the strains of Influenza Virus expected this year. Everyone 6 months of age and older should get vaccinated each flu season, which can begin as early as October and last as late as May. Studies have shown that two doses are needed in children younger than 9 the first year they are vaccinated in order to maximize the protective benefit from vaccination.

For more information on flu vaccines, speak with your child's health care provider or visit the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call:

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