



## Reading, Writing and Wellness

### Start the school year off right

Kids might not agree, but for some parents, it's the most wonderful time of the year as students head back to the classroom. You can help your children get off on the right foot for the new school year. Make sure they're healthy, rested and ready to learn.

### Wellness checks

All children need annual physicals. Why not schedule them as part of their back-to-school routine? Your child's doctor will check his or her physical development to make sure he or she is on track. The doctor will also give your child any required vaccines. If your child is planning to play sports, the checkup is a great time to bring this up and talk about ways to prevent injuries and deal with concussions. The exam will also give you the chance to talk about any nonurgent health questions from the past year.

### Stick to an early bedtime

More and more, people are recognizing the importance of sleep for a healthy lifestyle. This is especially true for children, who need more sleep on average than adults do. A lack of sleep can cause learning problems, behavior issues and difficulty concentrating. These can all have a negative impact on a student's academic performance.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)\* says children should get these amounts of sleep during a 24-hour period, including naps for younger kids:

- 4 to 12 months old: 12 to 16 hours
- 1 to 2 years old: 11 to 14 hours
- 3 to 5 years old: 10 to 13 hours
- 6 to 12 years old: 9 to 12 hours
- 13 to 18 years old: 8 to 10 hours

### Mindfulness for kids

Adults all over the world use mindfulness meditation as part of their wellness routines. That's the pursuit of increased mind-body awareness. Its principles can help children, as well. Meditation has been shown to:

- Improve sleep.
- Reduce anxiety.
- Increase focus.
- Lower stress.

When starting a meditation routine, start at a level that makes sense for your child. Talk to your child about being aware of his or her breathing. For instance, if your child is feeling stressed, have him or her take a deep breath to calm down. If bedtime stories are already a part of your evening, try talking through a guided meditation to help your child wind down at the end of a busy day. Most importantly, stick with the process and be patient with your child and yourself.

**Continued**





### **Unplug**

According to the AAP, you should limit children ages 2 to 5 to one hour of digital media each day. For children ages 5 and up, limit it to two hours. Start by setting a good example and putting away your cellphone or tablet. Come up with a family media plan that sets the ground rules for everyone so you can hold each other accountable. Lastly, embrace fun analog activities. Hold a family cooking contest or a talent show. Take a road trip or go for a hike — and leave your phones at home.

**Follow these tips to help make this your child's best school year yet.**

*\*The AAP is an independent organization that provides health information you may find helpful.*



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