

READY, SET, KINDERGARTEN!

Junior Kindergarten (JK) Resources



March 2022 (Updated August 2023)

Prepared by:

Emily Reynolds, Public Health Nurse
Timiskaming Health Unit
247 Whitewood Avenue
New Liskeard, ON P0J 1P0
1-866-747-4305

Kaidan Hardy, Public Health Promoter
Porcupine Health Unit
169 Pine Street South
Timmins, ON P4N 2K3
1-800-461-1818

Table of Contents

Ready-Set-Go! Health Check-Ups to Think About.....	1
Mental Health.....	4
Healthy School Lunch.....	5
Physical Activity.....	8
Balancing Busy Lives	9
Teach the Skills – Active Travel.....	9
Travel Safely.....	10
Free resources and services available at your local Health Unit	11

WELCOME TO KINDERGARTEN



Starting JK is a busy time! In this document, you will find information about how to prepare your child for their first day, what to expect, and some other health behaviour tips to help make this transition as smooth as possible.

Ready-Set-Go! Health Check-Ups to Think About

1. Healthy Smiles Ontario Program for Children and Youth: Schedule a dental check-up

Healthy teeth and gums are important for your child's growth and development. They are crucial for eating, speaking, and give shape to your child's face. Untreated dental conditions can affect sleep, self-esteem and the ability to concentrate and learn. It's important to establish a good dental hygiene routine early on. You should brush their teeth two times a day for two minutes each time. Help your child with brushing until they are able to print their own name and don't forget to floss. Yes, even baby teeth.

Eligible children and youth ages 17 and under in need of dental care in the province of Ontario can get access to FREE dental services through the Healthy Smiles Ontario program. Review the [eligibility requirements](#).

Registered Dental Hygienists (RDH) from the health unit will perform dental screenings to students in JK, SK, as well as grades 2, 4 and 7 annually. A dental screening is a quick visual inspection done to identify urgent conditions that are causing or will cause pain, and may provide access to the Healthy Smiles Ontario Program. Parents/guardians will be notified of the screening and an RDH will follow up on any urgent conditions. A dental screening is NOT a substitute for your child's regular exam at the dentist. Following the screening, each child will receive a folder with observations made by the registered dental hygienist describing any additional services they may be eligible to receive. If any urgent

dental conditions are identified, an information letter will be mailed, and a dental hygienist will contact you.

Regular dental visits are needed to maintain oral health and prevent issues before they start. Contact the health unit to find out how we can help!



Timiskaming Dental Team
705-647-4305 or 1-866-747-4305
Ext. 2280

Timmins Dental Team
705-267-1181 or 1-800-461-1818

2. Vision Health: Get an eye check-up

Vision health plays a vital role in a child's growth and development. In fact, 80% of classroom learning is visual and it is estimated that 25% of school-age children have vision problems that can affect their ability to learn. Fortunately, many vision conditions can be treated if they are caught early. Many vision disorders have no symptoms and can only be diagnosed by an optometrist. Comprehensive eye examinations are covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) once every 12 months for all children 0-19 years old. When required, free glasses are available to JK and SK children through the **Eye See...Eye Learn®** program; an initiative from **participating optometrists** and corporate partners.



Trained staff from the health unit will perform vision screenings to SK students in all schools annually. Vision screenings do not replace regular eye exams by an optometrist but can help to identify children at risk for vision disorders and encourage parents to book a comprehensive eye exam with their optometrist.

Staying Healthy!

Reduce the risk of catching and spreading infections!

Cover your mouth and nose with either a tissue, your upper sleeve or your elbow, when you cough or sneeze.

Encourage your child to wash their hands:

- After using the washroom
- Before eating
- Anytime they look dirty
- After touching animals
- After sneezing and coughing



Also, remind your child not to share objects such as water bottles, utensils and food.

Caring for Kids is a great resource from the Canadian Paediatric Society. For information on common illnesses and infections and how to care for a sick child visit www.caringforkids.cps.ca.

3. Immunizations: Make sure your child is up to date on their vaccines before school starts

As parents, you care about the health and well-being of your children. Immunizations help protect children from many serious diseases that are easily spread in schools. Under the Immunization School Pupils Act (ISPA), all students enrolled in schools in Ontario must be fully immunized against nine designated diseases:

- Diphtheria
- Polio
- Pertussis (whooping cough)
- Measles
- Tetanus
- Mumps
- Rubella
- Meningococcal C Infections
- Varicella (chicken pox) for those born in 2010 or later.



The Health Unit is required by law (ISPA) to keep an updated vaccination record throughout your child's school years. Kindergartners must be up-to-date with their routine vaccines which include a few vaccines given between the ages of 4-6. Parents/Guardians are responsible for providing the Health Unit with proof of their children's completed immunizations, unless a valid medical or philosophical/religious exemption is submitted.

Call the Health Unit to review your child's vaccination record or check online: [Timiskaming Health Unit Vaccination Record](#), [Porcupine Health Unit Vaccination Record](#).

Mental Health

Starting JK can be a stressful time for some children and parents. Teaching your child coping strategies and ways to manage their emotions can give them the necessary tools to handle this stress.



Focus on:

- Connecting, listening and responding as strategies to help your child.
- Helping children feel good about themselves. This can be done by accepting them for who they are.

If you have questions or concerns about your child's mental well-being, look for support options through:

- Strong Minds Strong Kids
- [KHST! Ideas, Tips and Strategies.pdf](#)
- School Mental Health Ontario: <https://smho-smso.ca/parents-and-caregivers/>
- Caring for Kids: https://caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/mentalhealth/mental_health
- Mental health foundations – resources for parents: [For Caregivers | mhfoundations-efft \(mentalhealthfoundations.ca\)](#)
- [Resources Archive - Institute of Child Psychology](#)

Healthy School Lunch

Sending your child to school with a balanced lunch gives them the energy and nutrients they need to learn and play.

Keep these tips in mind when planning lunches:

- Check your school policy on food allergies.
- Refer to Canada's food guide.
- Include a variety of vegetables and fruits.
- Include protein foods, like hummus, eggs, milk, yogurt, fish, or chicken.
- Choose whole grain products, like whole grain crackers, breads, or wraps.
- Involve your kids. Children who help prepare their lunch are more likely to eat it. Use containers that can be easily opened by your child.
- Make your own lunch kit rather than buying costly pre-made lunch kits: pack a reusable multi-compartment container with bite-sized cheese cubes, left over chicken chunks, whole grain crackers, and veggie sticks or fruit slices.
- Use reusable lunch containers and wash them between uses.
- Pack lunches in an insulated lunch bag with an ice pack to keep cold foods cold.
- Keep hot foods hot by using a thermos.
- Make water your child's "go to" drink. A reusable water bottle will keep your child hydrated all day. Plain cow's milk or unsweetened fortified soy beverage packed in a thermos can also be included.
- If accessing food for your child is difficult, please reach out to your school and local food banks for additional support.
- Access Temiskaming Shores Community Fridge located at the Public Library. Food items that would otherwise go to waste are donated to help decrease food waste and increase access to fresh, nutritious food that requires refrigeration. This program is free of charge and for anyone!
- For more ideas check out [School Lunch your Kids will Munch](#).



What to expect from the Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program (NFVP)

The NFVP is a school-based food literacy program that supplies two servings of vegetables and fruits weekly to students at school in Northern Ontario.

The Porcupine and Timiskaming Health Units work in collaboration with the [Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association \(OFVGA\)](#) and the [Ministry of Health](#) to bring the NFVP to your school.

Beyond healthy snacks, the program encourages healthy lifestyle education and awareness in schools to complement the education curriculum.

The resources provided by the health units for use both at home and in school assist our communities in building healthy habits.



About the Student Nutrition Program

In our area, the Red Cross supports school-based student nutrition programs to improve access to nutritious food. Programs must adhere to the [Nutrition Guidelines](#) set out by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Programming runs 3-5 days per week and can include breakfast (3 food groups) or snacks (2 food groups). Contact your child's school to see if they provide the Student Nutrition Program.

How much sleep is enough?

Age	Hours of sleep
Toddlers (1 to 2 years)	11 to 14
Preschoolers (3 to 5 years)	10 to 13
School aged children (6-12 years)	9 to 12

For information on healthy sleep routines, please visit:
https://caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/pregnancy-and-babies/healthy_sleep_for_your_baby_and_child

Tips for an easier bedtime:

- Have a consistent bedtime routine every day.
- Choose relaxing activities like a bath, reading from a book, or quiet chat before bed.
- Avoid TV, computer time, video games, or phone use for one hour before bedtime.
- Don't ignore bedtime fears. If your child has nightmares, reassure and comfort them.



Sleeping has many benefits. Children who consistently get a good night's sleep:

- Are more creative.
- Can concentrate on tasks for longer.
- Have better problem-solving abilities.
- Are better able to make positive decisions.
- Are more able to learn and remember new things.
- Have more energy during the day.
- Can create and maintain good relations with others.

For more information about sleep, visit

<https://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/article?contentid=645&language=english#/>

Physical Activity

Outdoor play is a basic childhood need and taking risks is a necessary part of play. Your child will be going outside to play and learn. Dress them for the weather and protect them from the sun's harmful rays with a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen.



Physical activity helps children:

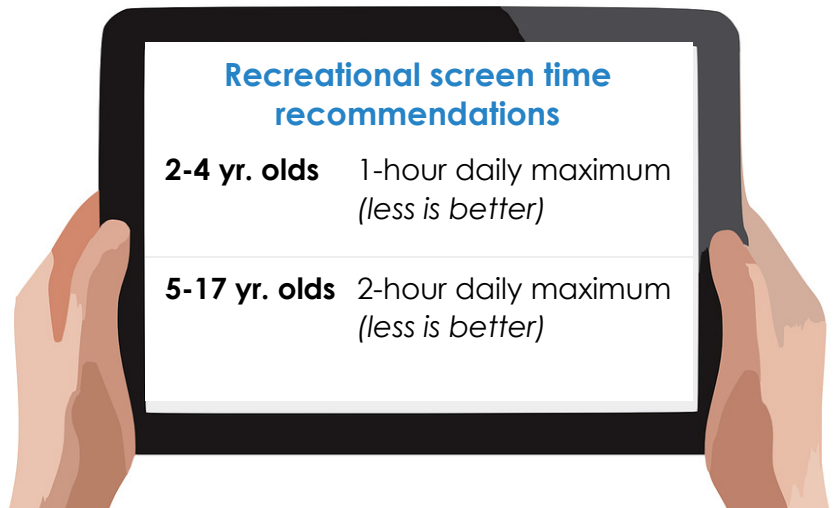
- Learn new things
- Have fun playing with friends
- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Feel good about themselves
- Improve their health
- Sleep better at night

As your child grows, it is important that they get a good balance between moving, sleeping and sitting. Get moving! At least 180 minutes is recommended. This can be spent in a variety of physical activities spread throughout the day, of which at least 60 minutes is energetic play - more is better!

Healthy Screen Time

Many families find that screen time is getting in the way of physical activity, sleep and family connection. We have some ideas on keeping the balance.

- Have a predictable family screen schedule and post it on your fridge.
- Create a screen free morning and bedtime routine for your child.
- Model healthy screen time by limiting your own screen time when your kids are around.



Balancing Busy Lives

Families are busy. We're trying to fit school, family time, work, household tasks, and outside commitments into each day. It can feel like a lot to manage.

- Schedule a regular family game night.
- Plan to eat family meals together whenever possible.
- Routines help children understand expectations and provide a sense of security in their lives.
 - Keep wake-up routines cheerful and positive. Mornings can be less stressful by organizing as much as possible the night before.
 - Developing a regular bedtime routine can look like doing relaxing activities such as reading, listening to calm music or laying in bed talking quietly about the day.
- Dedicate screen-free time to do something fun with your child. This is an opportunity to talk about your day and bond with your child.
- Tuck children into bed each night to give them a feeling of security.

Teach the Skills – Active Travel

All JK/SK students are eligible for the school bus. However, starting in grade 1 children must walk if they live within 800m of the school, and starting in grade 4, children must walk if they live within 1.6 kms of the school.

It's never too early to start teaching children walking and biking skills. Adult-led instruction and modelling of safe-pedestrian behaviors can help children learn by giving an opportunity to discuss their safety in real-world walking situations. Visit WalkNRoll.ca for [colouring pages](#) and other age-appropriate resources for teaching children [safe walking](#) and [biking skills](#).



Growth and Development Key Points for Street Safety

Children age four to six:

- Need supervision.
- Are ready to practice the basics.
- May do the unexpected.
- Need adults to model safe walking behaviour.

Travel Safely!

It's best to not rush your child through the stages of car seats. Keep your child in each stage for longer, in a seat that fits them and accommodates their weight and height. Children under 13 years old are safest in the back seat of a vehicle. Keep your child in a forward-facing car seat with a five-point harness until they weigh at least 18 kg (40 lbs) **and** are able to sit correctly in a booster seat. This may be at 4, 5, 6 or even 7 years old.

A booster seat positions your child so that the adult seat belt fits safely across their strongest bones and away from their soft belly. Your child must weigh at least 18 kg (40 pounds) to use a booster seat.

Your child can graduate from a booster seat to just the seatbelt when they are 4'9" OR 36 kg (80 lb) OR 8 years old, but they should continue to use a booster seat until the adult seat belt safely fits their body, usually between 10-12 years old.

Timiskaming Health Unit offers free Car Seat Inspections. For more information or to book an appointment, call 1-866-747-4305 and ask to speak to a Child Passenger Safety Technician (CPST).



Free resources and services available at your local Health Unit

- Breastfeeding support
- Developmental screening
- Healthy Growth and Development
 - Blended-Home visiting program
- Parenting education
- Car seat inspections (THU only)
- Prenatal education
- Postpartum support
- Dental care
- Immunizations
- Smoking cessation support (THU only)
- Smoking cessation resources (PHU)
- Sexual Health services

Other Provincial resources:

- Health811: connect with a registered nurse day or night for free, secure and confidential health advice
 - Call 811 (TTY: 1-866-797-0007)
 - Chat online: <https://health811.ontario.ca/static/guest/home>