A Healthy Start to School
Important Phone Numbers

*Keep these by your phone!*

**Ambulance, Police, Fire:** *911*

**Non-emergency Health Information and Services:** *811*
TTY: 711

**Poison Control:** *902-470-8161* or *1-800-565-8161*

**MSI:**
Toll free: 1-800-563-8880
Within Halifax Regional Municipality: 902-497-7008

**Health Care Provider:** ___________________________________________________________________

**School:** _____________________________________________________________________________

**Teacher:** ___________________________________________________________________________

**Local Public Health Services Office:** ___________________________________________________________________
(see pages 44-45)
A Healthy Start to School
The Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the school health teams, parents and teachers in the Western Health Region whose assistance has made this book possible.

We would also like to acknowledge:

Nobody’s Perfect and Ready or Not!, for their inspiration and successful model for presenting information to parents.

The Feeling Good Inside & Out project at the IWK Health Centre for their information on healthy body image.

*Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for Children Aged 5–11 Years* and *Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Children Aged 5–11 Years*, Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, ©2011. Reproduced with the permission of the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology.

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Starting school is a big step in a child’s life — and in a family’s life too. New people, new places, new routines, new experiences... it can take a while to get used to it all.

It’s good to know that you’re not alone. Your child’s education is a team effort for you, your child, your child’s teacher and your school.

We want you to know that your child’s health is a team effort too. Your Public Health Team is made up of a Public Health Nurse, licensed practical nurse, nutritionist, dental hygienist and health educator. The Public Health Team visits schools to offer advice, support and programs for students, parents and teachers.

Your Public Health Team can help you with issues like safety, disease prevention, parenting, active living and healthy eating. Any parent or community group can call the nearest local Public Health Services office and ask for someone from the Public Health Team to discuss a health issue that you’d like to learn more about. Phone numbers are listed in the last section of this book.

We hope this book will answer some of the health questions you may have now that your child is starting school. The book is divided into six sections:

• “Off to a Healthy Start” suggests things you can do to keep your child healthy at school
• “School Health and Safety” covers your child’s health needs for school
• “Healthy Eating” contains information about the Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools as well as ideas for healthy breakfasts, lunches and snacks
• “Keeping Kids Healthy During the Elementary Years” offers information that you’ll find helpful as your child moves through the school years
• “Preventing the Spread of Illness” tells you about diseases that you may hear more about now that your child will be spending more time with a larger group of kids
• “For More Information” offers a list of addresses, phone and fax numbers to contact for further information

Your child’s school years are a time of growth, change and excitement. Enjoy them!

We hope the information in this book will help you and your child to have a healthy start in school.
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Parents Do Make a Difference

Starting school is an exciting time for parents and children. It can also be a scary time for small children and for parents thinking about their little one going off alone.

Parents have an important role to play in making their child’s first experience with school happy and healthy. There’s a lot you can do to help!

Get to Know Your Child’s School

Your child will be healthier and happier in school if you show you care about what he or she is doing. Let your child know you care about school:

• Know the names of the teachers and the principal. Keep in touch with your child’s teacher.
• Know who your child plays with at school. Know the names of his or her friends.
• Know what your child is learning and studying. Talk with your child about school. Listen when he or she talks to you about it.
• Go to parent-teacher meetings and support school activities.

Learn About School Policies

All schools have policies that guide how they handle issues like discipline, foods available at school, safety, poison prevention, taking medicine during school, and emergency care — like using epi-pens with children who have life threatening allergies. Find out what your school’s policies are and help your child to learn and follow them.

Tell the School if Your Child Has Special Health Needs

Be sure to tell the school if your child has a health problem such as a severe allergy, diabetes or seizures. You will need to discuss your child’s condition and any special needs with all school staff members. This includes teachers, bus drivers, food service staff and playground supervisors.

Help Out at School if You Can

Parents who have the time can work with other parents to make school safe and healthy. You can do this by joining the Home and School Association. If your school doesn’t have a Home and School, you can work with other parents to start one. Parents can work together to look at things like playground safety, supervision for kids before and after school, the kinds of food that are available in the school, how fundraising is done and many other issues.
Help Your Child Get Used to School Rules

The kind of behaviour that is expected in school may be different from what your child has been used to at home or in preschool. Teachers have many children in the class and it is important for your child to understand that everyone needs to cooperate. Find out about your school’s policy on discipline and talk with your child’s teacher if you have any concerns.

Support Your Child

New experiences, even ones we’re looking forward to, can be stressful. Help your child get used to the idea of going to school. Talk about what it will be like and listen when your child talks about what he or she expects or is worried about. Visit the school with your child and meet the teachers. You can also practice things like walking to the bus stop or to school and packing lunches and snacks.

Getting used to being part of a class, adjusting to new rules and learning how to get along with the teacher can be difficult for some children. Keep an eye on your child’s behaviour and watch for changes that may show that your child’s self esteem is suffering. These could be things like:
• not wanting to go to school
• not wanting to talk about school
• crying
• changes from the way your child normally eats, sleeps or acts

If you notice any of these changes talk with your child and your child’s teacher. This is a time when your child will need extra love and support. See the section of this book called “Self-Esteem” for some ideas on how to help your child feel good about him or herself. If you are very worried, talk to your health care provider or Public Health Nurse.

Talk to the School About Your Concerns

If you have a concern about what your child is learning, how your child is adapting to school, how your child is getting along with the other kids, or any other issue, first call or meet with the teacher to talk about it. If you are still concerned after talking with the teacher, talk with the principal. If you are still not satisfied, go to the school board.

Don’t be embarrassed to talk to the teacher about something that seems small. It is best for everyone if a small problem can be taken care of before it becomes a big problem.
Immunization

Starting school makes it more likely that your child could catch common childhood diseases. Immunization can protect your child from several of these. It’s important that immunizations be kept up-to-date because illnesses can spread easily among children in a classroom.

Before school starts it is important to make sure that your child has the immunizations he or she needs.

Check the schedule on the next page to see if your child’s immunizations are up to date. If they’re not, see your health care provider or contact your local Public Health Services office. If your child has not had all the recommended shots by September, a Public Health Nurse may contact you.

Flu vaccines are recommended for all children over age 6 months. Flu can spread quickly in a classroom. This makes flu vaccines even more important when your child starts school.

For more information on influenza vaccine for children, see the schedule on the next page and refer to: novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/flu.asp

DID YOU KNOW: Adults need a Tetanus, Pertussis and Diphtheria booster once as an adult? Your health is important to your children!
Routine Immunization Schedule

Note: Childhood immunizations have changed in the past few years. This schedule may not reflect the vaccines that you or your children received. High risk children may be eligible for additional vaccines. For more information, talk to your health care provider or local Public Health Services office.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VACCINES</th>
<th>2 months</th>
<th>4 months</th>
<th>6 months</th>
<th>12 months</th>
<th>18 months</th>
<th>4-6 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>DTaP-IPV-Hib</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis (whooping cough), polio, and Haemophilus influenzae type b vaccine</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pneumo Conj.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men C Conj.</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meningococcal group C conjugate vaccine</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMRV*</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tdap-IPV</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis (whooping cough), and polio vaccine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The second dose of MMRV can be given only once between 18 months and 6 years of age.

Seasonal Flu Vaccines

- Seasonal flu vaccines are free for all Nova Scotians. They are recommended for all adults and children EXCEPT for babies under 6 months.
- Seasonal flu vaccines are strongly recommended for anyone who lives with or takes care of a child under 5 years, and for anyone living in a home where a newborn is expected during influenza season (October to April). This includes both adults and older children.
- Seasonal flu vaccines are also strongly recommended for children with a health condition that places them at high risk and for anyone who lives with or takes care of these children.
- Children under 9 years old getting their first flu vaccine need 2 doses.
- For more information about seasonal flu vaccines, see: novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/flu.asp

Up to date as of August 2015

Please refer to the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness website for the most recent schedule: novascotia.ca/dhw
Walking to School Safely

Walking to school everyday is a great way to increase your child’s physical activity. Although many parents walk with their children when they first start school, most children soon want to walk with their friends. When they walk to school without you, they need to know safety rules and understand why they must follow them.

There are different pedestrian safety considerations for children at different ages. Children under the age of 9 years are less able to understand the risks of the road even if they are capable of memorizing and recounting the safety rules. They are less able to follow those rules in a dangerous situation and cannot assess risks such as the speed of an approaching car. Safety can be enhanced for young children by walking in a group with older children or walking with a responsible adult.

To help keep your child safe:

- Make up a schedule for walking to and from school. Your child should get used to leaving home on time and getting to school on time. Children also need to know when you expect them to arrive at home after school. You should allow enough time so that your child doesn’t have to rush, but not so much that he or she has time to fool around. Before school starts, practice walking to school with your child. This will show you both how long it takes and help you decide on the best route.

- Pick the safest route to school. Pick the route to school that has the least traffic, the fewest intersections and the most sidewalks. Practice walking the route with your child. It is also a good idea to teach your child another safe route to school in case the regular route is cut off for some reason.

- Encourage your children not to walk alone. Walking with a friend or in a group is safest. Parents can organize a “Walking School Bus” in their neighbourhood. This means that parents or other volunteers take turns walking all the children to school by “picking children up” along the way. To learn how to organize a walking school bus see: saferoutesns.ca

- Teach your child these basic safety rules.
  - It is not safe to run out from between parked cars or to play in the street.
  - The only safe place to cross the street is at the corner. It is not safe to jaywalk.
  - When crossing the street, look in all directions to make sure no traffic is coming. Make sure it is safe to cross.
  - When walking along a road without sidewalks, it is safest to walk along the left side, facing the traffic.
  - Walk straight to school and straight home after school. It is not safe to talk to strangers or take rides with strangers.

Ask your school to organize a Making Tracks safety skills module. This can help children learn about walking safely. You can find out more about this at: saferoutesns.ca

It is a good idea to dress your child in bright colours so that he or she is easy to see, especially on rainy, cloudy or dark days.

It’s also a good idea NOT to allow children to listen to music (for example, an MP3 player), or to use a cellphone or hand held video game, while walking to school. This is distracting and children may not be able to hear traffic warnings.

Safety on the School Bus

If your child travels on a school bus, make sure he or she understands and follows the school rules for how to behave on the bus. These rules are in place to help make the trip to and from school a safe one.
You should also show your child a safe place to stand while waiting for the bus. Be sure your child understands that it is dangerous to play near the road while waiting for the bus to arrive.

Most school bus injuries happen while children are getting on or off the bus. These injuries can happen when the bus driver can’t see the child and hits him or her while pulling away, or when the child is hit by a car that doesn’t stop for the flashing school bus lights.

The best way to protect your child is to take him or her to and from the bus stop and help him or her on and off the bus. If this isn’t possible, talk to the bus driver about the safest way to get on and off the bus and then practice this with your child.

You’ll find more information on safety in the section on “Keeping Kids Healthy During the Elementary Years.”

**Vision Screening**

It is likely that the first Public Health Team member that your child will meet will be the nurse who tests his or her eyes during vision screening.

All children have their vision tested as part of the school health program when they are in grade primary or before they enter school.

The results of this test will be shared with you.

Vision screening is done when your child starts school because it is important to catch any problems right away. Catching vision problems early means that they can be corrected before they cause your child to fall behind in school.

It’s a good idea to have your child’s vision tested by an eye doctor (optometrist) before he or she starts school and on a regular basis throughout the school years. An eye examination every two years is covered by MSI until your child’s 10th birthday.

**Hearing and Speech**

Your child’s hearing is precious. A hearing loss that isn’t noticed and treated will slow your child’s speech and language development. This makes it more difficult for your child to connect with other people and can cause social, emotional and learning problems.

Parents are in the best position to notice hearing loss in their child.

Ask yourself:
- Does your child react to sounds and respond to voices the way other children do?
- Does your child seem to be speaking as well as other children who are the same age?
- Does your child often have ear infections that seem to linger?
- Has your child had any illnesses (like scarlet fever or mumps) or taken any medications that might cause hearing loss?
- Does your family have a history of hearing loss in childhood?

If you have questions or concerns about your child’s speech or response to sound, contact the Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech Clinic nearest you. Contact numbers are listed in the back of this book.

**Dental Health**

Helping your child learn good dental health habits is the start of a lifetime of healthy teeth and gums. Get each day off to a healthy start by making sure your child brushes well after breakfast.

Some good habits for healthy teeth:
- **Brush twice a day**, morning and evening, to remove plaque from teeth and gums. Plaque is a sticky layer of germs that forms on teeth and gums. It can cause cavities and gum disease if it isn’t removed.
When brushing:
- Use a soft bristled brush.
- Use only a tiny pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste and spit out the toothpaste after brushing.
- Brush for the length of a song (about 2 or 3 minutes).
- Children need help brushing their teeth every day until they are able to do a good job on their own (usually by age 8).

• **Floss between your child’s teeth once a day.** This will remove plaque from between teeth and under the gums. Parents will need to help with their child’s flossing until he/she is about 10 years old.

• **Check your child’s teeth often.** If you notice any brown or white spots on your child’s teeth, call a dentist. If they’re not treated, these spots can lead to tooth decay.

Between the ages of 4 and 6, children begin to lose their primary teeth. Watch for your child’s 6-year molars to come in behind the last primary teeth. Check with your dentist or dental hygienist to see if these molars need sealants. (A sealant is a thin plastic material that protects the teeth.)

• **Protect your child’s teeth.** Teach your child not to chew on things like pencils and to be careful when playing on swings, slides and other playground equipment. When your child starts to play sports — neighbourhood games like street hockey as well as organized sports — encourage him or her to use a mouthguard. If your child injures a tooth, call your dentist right away.

• **Pack healthy, tooth-friendly, snacks for your child to eat at school.** Sticky, sugary snacks cling to the teeth and cause tooth decay. Fresh fruit and vegetables; cheddar cheese; cooked eggs; whole grain (for example, oat, corn, rye, or rice) or whole wheat crackers and breadsticks are snacks that are both nutritious and friendly to teeth.

• **Take your child to the dentist regularly.** From their first birthday on, children should have regular visits to the dentist. With regular visits, the dentist can catch problems before they become serious. Your dentist can also give you advice on preventing tooth decay and explain which services are covered by the MSI Children’s Oral Health Program. You can also call QuickCard Solutions toll-free number: 1-888-846-9199. In the Halifax Regional Municipality, call: 902-492-2111.

**School-based Fluoride Mouthrinse Program**
Fluoride mouthrinse also helps to build healthy teeth by allowing fluoride to coat the outer surface of teeth. This makes the tooth enamel stronger and more able to resist cavities. Public Health Services offers a weekly Fluoride Mouthrinse Program to children in grades primary through six in selected elementary schools across Nova Scotia. The program is coordinated and supported by Public Health Dental Hygienists and delivered by trained volunteers. If your child attends a school where the program is offered, a consent form and fact sheet on the program will be sent home early in the school year.

**Indoor Air Quality at School**
Children spend a large part of the day in school. This means that a comfortable and healthy school environment is important to their health, well-being and ability to learn.

Some parents, especially those whose children suffer from asthma and allergies, may be concerned about the quality of the air in their child’s school. Comfort and the quality of the air can be affected by temperature, humidity, the amount of fresh air and the operation and maintenance of the air handling...
system (if your child’s school has one). Dust, certain kinds of mould, school renovations and the vapours some products release into the air can also affect the health and comfort of students and teachers.

If you are worried about air quality or health problems that may be affected by the physical environment at your child’s school, talk with your child’s teacher and principal to try to find out what exactly is causing the problem. Changes in the kinds of products used in the school or improvements in the way the school is cleaned may solve the problem. Changes in the operation of the air handling units may also help.

If you are still concerned, you can contact the school board, your local office of the Department of Environment or your local Public Health Services office.

**Bullying**

Bullying is repeated, harmful acts or cruel behaviour against another person. It can include:
- Rejecting or excluding a child from a group
- Name-calling, put-downs, teasing, humiliation
- Saying mean or cruel things about a child
- Hitting, kicking or hurting physically
- Frightening or threatening
- Damaging belongings

Bullying is a serious issue and school is a place where bullying can happen. Bullying affects all children, whether they are bullies, victims of a bully, or see others being bullied. The effects of bullying can last a lifetime.

Unfortunately, most bullying goes unnoticed and unreported. Teachers, students, support staff, parents and administrators need to work as a team to take action against bullying.

**How should my child react to bullying?**

*If your child sees someone being bullied, tell him or her to:*
- Be a friend for the victim.
- Never join in with the bullying. Never encourage a bully.
- Ask a teacher or other adult to stop the bullying. Sometimes it might feel safer if a group of children tell their teacher about the bullying together.

*If your child is being bullied, tell him or her to:*
- Avoid being alone with a bully.
- Call for help. Ask an adult to help out.
- Take a stand. Try not to get angry or act afraid. Try using humor or being assertive when dealing with bullies.

Children are sometimes bullied because they are different in some way. They can be targets of a bully because of the colour of their skin, their name, their size, their intelligence, the way they walk — anything that makes them stand out. Help your children to understand that they are not the problem. The bully is the problem. No one should have to put up with being bullied.

*If your child is a bully, he or she needs to change. Help your child to:*
- Stop the behavior immediately.
- Take responsibility for his or her actions.
• Find new ways to act that don’t hurt people.
• Find friends who do not bully or hurt others.

Children who bully others often have low self-esteem. Sometimes they have been bullied themselves. They need your help to deal with these problems.

Violence and Abuse

As your child moves out into the bigger world of school, he or she will be meeting new people and dealing with new situations. At some point, you or your child may have to deal — directly or indirectly — with violence or abuse.

Child abuse is not limited to any one group of people. It can happen to any family — rich or poor, city or country, one parent or two.

Violence and abuse can take several forms.

• **Physical Abuse** is any act that physically hurts or injures a child. This includes hitting, cutting, burning, kicking and pushing. Anything that hurts is physical abuse.

• **Neglect** is what happens when a child is not given the care needed for healthy physical, mental or social growth. It is neglect when a family doesn’t give a child good food and clothing; a clean, safe place to live; good medical and health care; and good general care. It is also neglect when a family doesn’t watch over a child and keep him or her safe.

• **Emotional Abuse** can take many different forms. Not showing love for a child; rejecting, criticizing, ignoring or frightening a child; and often speaking cruelly or angrily to a child are all forms of emotional abuse.

• **Sexual Abuse** happens when an adult or teenager uses a child for sexual purposes. It can include rape, incest, touching or playing with a child’s private parts, having a child touch another person’s private parts or using a child for pornographic materials or for prostitution.

Children are also considered to be abused and in need of protection if they are in a home where they witness violence between others, for example their father abusing their mother.

Parents should be aware of:

• **Shared responsibility.**

Parents should realize that when a child starts school, the welfare of the child becomes a concern of the school as well as of the family. If the professionals who work with a child — teachers, counselors, principals, Public Health staff — have any reason to suspect that the child is being neglected or physically, emotionally, or sexually abused, they have a legal and moral obligation to report it to an agency.

• **Personal responsibility.**

When they start school, children begin to bring new friends home to play. Parents who have reason to believe that one of their child’s friends is being abused or neglected, have a legal obligation to report their concerns to the Department of Community Services or the Children’s Aid Society.
• **Schoolyard violence.**
  Children may see violence in movies, on TV or at home and some of them act it out on the playground. Every child deserves a safe school environment and it’s hard for anyone to feel safe if he or she is being bullied.

  If you are concerned about violence in your child’s school, or if you think your child is being bullied, talk to your child’s teacher. Schools have policies to deal with violence. Some schools have a “zero tolerance” policy that specifies certain kinds of discipline for any form of violence or hitting. Many schools are introducing “violence-free school” programs or conflict resolution programs to teach kids skills for dealing with disputes without violence. Your child needs to understand what is considered to be “violent” at his or her school.

**Street Proofing and Personal Safety**

Most parents tell their children “be careful of strangers” and “don’t go anywhere with someone you don’t know.” But did you know that more than 8 out of 10 abusers are people the child knows?

To help keep your children safe, you need some rules that apply to everyone, even people your children know. You need to help your children practice using these rules and to be sure they understand why they are important.

**As a parent:**

- **Check your babysitter’s references.** If your children go to the sitter’s home, be sure you check out any other teens or adults who will be there when children are present.

- **Get to know the adults and teens who work with your children.** This includes adults and teens your children know at school, church, sports and clubs.

- **Use the proper names of body parts (for example, penis, vagina, breasts).** Your children need to hear these words used and be comfortable using them.

- **Teach your children the difference between “good touches” and “bad touches.”** Most touching is positive and healthy. The cuddles, hugs and kisses you share with your children are “good touches” — you and your children feel loved, comforted, close and safe. Sharing lots of good touches will help your children recognize bad touches if they ever encounter them.

  Give examples of bad touches, like:
  - “No one should touch your private parts.”
  - “It’s wrong for someone to ask you to touch his penis.”
  - “Asking you to take your clothes off counts as a bad touch.”
  - “Anytime hugging, kissing or tickling makes you feel funny, it’s a bad touch.”

  Bad touching does not feel good or safe. Tell your children to listen to their feelings. No child has to put up with anything that feels wrong or uncomfortable.

- **Be sure your children know it’s OK to say “No, don’t touch me!” or “Stop that!”** It takes a lot of self-confidence for children to be able to say this to an adult or a teenager. All children need to know that they have the right to say “NO” if someone touches them or asks them to do something that makes them uncomfortable. They need to know that this is not rude.

  You need to respect your children’s right to say “No”, too. Children should not be forced into any activity they are not comfortable with. This includes, kissing, tickling, squeezing or spending private time with anyone they don’t want to be with.
• Let your children know that they can trust you and talk to you. Children need to know that they must tell a parent if anyone — even someone they love — threatens them or touches them in a way that doesn’t feel right. Tell your child that it is wrong for an adult or a teenager to ask them to keep things they do together secret.

When your children talk to you, listen to and respect what they say. For example, if a child says, “I don’t like my music teacher any more,” ask “Why not?”

As a family:
• Use a secret family code. This is a special word or phrase that will tell your child it’s safe to go with an adult or teenager. Your child should NEVER go with anyone, even close family friends, unless the friend can give the child the secret code. Once the code has been used, it should be changed.

• Make some family rules.
  – Walk in pairs or a group, not alone.
  – Walk home from school the same way every day, unless their regular route is blocked (by construction, for example). Your child must tell you if he or she is coming home a different way.
  – Do not go into public washrooms alone.
  – You will be on time to pick up your child. If you are going to be late for a pick-up, you and your child should agree in advance on a safe place for the child to wait. For example, a well-lit store, inside the arena or inside the school are safe places.

• Learn about sexual abuse prevention as a family.
  Read a book or watch a video together. Talk about it with your child. A good video is “Feeling Yes, Feeling No,” which may be available from your local library.

What should you do if your child tells you he or she has been approached or assaulted?
Try not to panic. Don’t let your anger show — your child could easily think that you are angry at him or her. Tell your child, “I’m so glad you told me about this.”

• Listen to your child. Take it slowly. Ask for details but let him or her tell you what happened in his or her own words. Use drawings or dolls if this is easier for your child, but don’t suggest other words or change what’s being said. Your ideas might confuse the child and blur the truth.

• Believe your child. Children seldom lie about sexual abuse. Tell your child that you believe him or her. Tell your child that you are glad he or she told you what happened.

• Do not blame your child. Say, “This is not your fault.” Do not let your child think for one minute that he or she is to blame for what happened or is in any way at fault.

• Support your child. Recognize and accept your child’s feelings, whether they are anger, fear, sadness or anxiety. Let your child know that you will protect him or her from further abuse.

• Get help. The law says that you must call the police or child protection officials at once if you have reason to believe that your child, or any child, has been abused. You may also want to think about getting counselling to help your child through the healing process.
A Healthy Start to School - Healthy Eating

**Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools**

All students need healthy food and beverages to grow, learn, play, and develop into healthy adults.

Children learn about healthy eating in the classroom and at home. Having healthy food and beverages available in school helps support healthy eating messages learned in the classroom, at home, and in other settings.

Eating well and making healthy food choices takes more than will power. The *Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools* makes it easier for students to make wise food and beverage choices while in school.

Principals, teachers, parents, students, government and Public Health staff, and nutrition professionals created the *Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools*.

The policy helps ensure that the food and beverages served and sold in school canteens, cafeterias, vending machines, meal programs, and for special functions and fundraising:
- are healthy, safe, and affordable
- support student health and learning
- support the health messages learned in the classroom and at home
- make healthy food and beverage choices easy

The policy is based on *Eating Well With Canada’s Food Guide* (see page 17 to 22) and describes the kinds of food and beverages schools can serve and sell during the school day. The foods and beverages served and sold in your child’s school should include a wide selection of vegetables and fruit, whole grains, and lower fat choices.

The policy does not apply to food or beverages that you send to school for your child’s lunch and recess snacks. However, we encourage you to support your school’s efforts to give children healthy food choices.

Schools have gradually changed the kinds of food and beverages served and sold to students since September 2006. Full implementation of this policy is now in effect (as of June 2009). Schools will be provided with ongoing local and provincial support to maintain the policy and parents are encouraged to provide support as well. Many schools have ‘healthy food’ committees that make decisions about the food and beverages served and sold in school. Ask if your child’s school has a ‘healthy food’ committee and think about becoming involved.

To find out more about the *Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools* ask to see a copy at your child’s school or visit ednet.ns.ca.

**School Policies on Food Allergies**

Some children have life-threatening allergies to peanuts or other foods.

Find out if your child’s school has a policy to protect children with allergies. For example, some policies state that children cannot bring certain foods — like peanut butter — to school or carry them on the bus.

If your school has a policy like this, your child can continue to enjoy peanuts, peanut butter and other foods that contain nuts, at home.

You can get ideas for healthy lunches and snacks from your local Public Health Services office.
Breakfast of Champions

Breakfast is important for everyone but it is critical for growing children. Without a good breakfast, children may be tired, cranky, and have trouble concentrating. This makes it difficult for them to learn. Children who eat breakfast feel better and do better in school.

Eating Well With Canada’s Food Guide has four food groups:
• Vegetables and Fruit
• Grain Products
• Milk and Alternatives
• Meat and Alternatives

You’ll find a copy of the Eating Well With Canada’s Food Guide on page 17 to 22. A healthy breakfast has foods from three of these four food groups. For example, a bagel (Grain Products), an orange (Vegetables and Fruit), and a glass of milk (Milk and Alternatives) make a healthy breakfast and will get kids off to a good start. See Eating Well With Canada’s Food Guide for the amount and type of foods and beverages that are recommended for your child.

Foods like cake, donuts, toaster pastries and sugary fruit beverages don’t give kids the nourishment they need to start their day. These foods and beverages are high in calories, fats, sugar, and/or salt (sodium) and they shouldn’t replace the recommended healthy foods from the four food groups.

Breakfast doesn’t have to be fancy or traditional. Try leftovers, cheese and crackers, or a sandwich. If you’re short of time in the morning, get breakfast ready the night before. You can also pack extra food with their lunch so your children can eat breakfast on the way to school or after they get there.

Breakfast Ideas

Yogurt Shake
In a blender mix fruit, yogurt, milk, and all-bran cereal.

Cheese Boats
Tuck slices of cheese into celery sticks. Serve with whole grain toast, crackers, or a muffin.

Jiffy Pizza
Top half a whole-wheat bun or English muffin with tomato sauce and mozzarella cheese. Bake.

Happy Face Cereal
Top hot, whole grain cereal (e.g. oatmeal) with slices of bananas, apples, or other fruit to make a happy face. Serve with lower fat (e.g. 2%, 1%, or skim) milk or yogurt.

Apple Treasures
Core an apple, stuff with peanut or nut butter,* and top with raisins.

Nutty Bananas
Dip a banana in lower fat yogurt and roll in wheat germ, crushed nuts,* or dry whole grain cereal. Enjoy with a glass of lower fat milk.

Breakfast Trail Mix
Mix together different dry whole grain cereals, (e.g. cheerios, shreds, bite-size shredded wheat) pretzels, and nuts,* in a plastic bag. A juice box makes it a complete breakfast to go.

Toasted Cheese Treat
A toasted whole grain sandwich with cheddar cheese and tomato can provide a tasty morning alternative.

*Some children have life-threatening allergies to peanuts or other foods. Find out if your child’s school has a policy to protect children with allergies.
**Sandwiches**

Try egg salad, cheese, peanut or nut butter, tuna, or salmon. Use different kinds of whole grain breads, rolls, or wraps.

**Healthy Lunches**

Lunches for school can taste good, be easy to pack and eat and still be healthy.

For healthy lunches:
- Choose Grain Products lower in fat, sugar, and/or salt (sodium)
- Choose Vegetables and Fruit more often than juices
- Choose lower fat Milks and Alternatives (i.e. skim, 1%, or 2% milk fat)
- Choose lean Meats and Alternatives with little or no added fat or salt.

Variety and imagination are the key:
- Enjoy a variety of foods from the four food groups. See *Eating Well With Canada’s Food Guide* for the recommended amount and type of foods and beverages for your child.
- Make sandwiches with different kinds of grain products, like bagels, pitas, flour tortillas, and rolls. Make at least half of your grain products whole grain each day.
- Make sandwiches more interesting by adding some vegetables or fruit like grated carrot, red or green pepper, apple slices, lettuce, cucumber, tomato, or onion.

**TIP:** To get at least one dark green (e.g. broccoli, romaine lettuce) and one orange vegetable (e.g. carrot, sweet potato) each day, pack one in a lunch or add it to a sandwich.

**Healthy Lunch Ideas**

**Pizza Lunch**

- Left-over cheese or vegetable pizza
- Pear
- Lower fat milk

**“Enviro” Cracker Pack Lunch**

- Skip the pre-packed and make your own:
  - Variety of whole grain crackers
  - Hard cheese, slices of lean meats, boiled egg
  - Sliced cucumber and peppers
  - Lower fat yogurt and fruit

**Munch on the Move**

- Peanut or other nut butter*
- Cheese chunk or lower fat yogurt
- Fruit cup
- Lower fat milk

**Wrap ‘n Roll**

- Tortilla wrap with slices of lean chicken, beef or ham, cheddar cheese, and lettuce
- Banana
- Orange juice

**Bagel Sandwich Lunch**

- Whole grain bagel sandwich with tuna salad
- Carrot and celery sticks
- Lower fat chocolate milk

**Mexican Fiesta**

- Bean and vegetable burrito
- Lower fat milk
- Orange

**Snacks That Count**

Pack a snack for recess! Active, growing children need small, nutritious snacks to keep them going throughout the day.

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*Some children have life-threatening allergies to peanuts or other foods. Find out if your child’s school has a policy to protect children with allergies.*
Foods for Healthy Snacking at School

**Choose Vegetables & Fruit More Often than Juices**
- Raw fruit (e.g. apples, pears, bananas)
- Canned fruit
- Raw vegetables (e.g. carrot, celery, broccoli, turnip)
- Fruit juice
- Vegetable juice

**Choose Whole Grain Products (low in fat, sugar, and salt). Make at least half of your grain products whole grain each day.**
- Whole grain bread or crackers
- Unsweetened, whole grain cereal
- Lower fat whole grain muffin
- Pita bread
- Bagel

**Choose Lower Fat Milk and Alternatives**
- Milk, white or flavoured (2% MF or less)
- Fortified soy beverages
- Yogurt or yogurt dip (2% MF or less)
- Hard cheese (less than 20% MF)

**Choose Lean Meat & Alternatives (with little or no added fat or salt)**
- Lean meat slices
- Dry roasted nuts and seeds (no added salt or oil)*
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Peanut or nut butters*

- Hummus
- Baked beans

**Try a Great Snack Combination**
- Whole grain crackers and lower fat cheese
- Peanut or nut butter* on a whole grain bagel
- Half of a sandwich
- Lower fat yogurt parfait with lower fat granola
- Fruit and plain yogurt
- Whole grain crackers, vegetables, and bean based dip
- Trail mix (mix of whole grain cereals) and lower fat milk

**Snacks to Limit**
Another important step towards better health and healthy body weight is to limit foods and beverages high in calories, fat, sugar and/or salt (sodium) such as: chocolate and candies; cookies and donuts; ice cream and frozen desserts; French fries and potato chips; fruit-flavoured drinks, soft drinks, sports energy drinks.

*Some children have life-threatening allergies to peanuts or other foods. Find out if your child's school has a policy to protect children with allergies.*
Keeping Foods Safe at School

To keep lunches and snacks fresh and healthy:

• Store lunches and snacks in the fridge until the kids are ready to leave for the day.
• Pack foods that need to be kept cold in an insulated lunch bag. Include an ice pack or frozen juice box.
• Don’t depend on a thermos to keep hot foods hot. A thermos may not be able to keep the food hot enough to prevent food poisoning. If you send foods like soup, spaghetti, or casserole to school, keep them cold. In some schools children can reheat these kinds of foods.
• Wash lunch bags and boxes, plastic containers, and all utensils every day. Used plastic, waxed paper, or foil wrappings may carry bacteria and shouldn’t be reused.

Beverages

Healthy, active children often get thirsty and need to drink throughout the day.

See Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide (pages 17 to 22) for the recommended amounts and types of beverages for your child.

Water: Remember to encourage children to satisfy their thirst with water between meals! Water is a calorie-free way to quench thirst. It is the least expensive and most convenient drink of all. Children need to drink more water in hot weather or when they are very active. Plain unsweetened, unflavoured water with no additives (for example, caffeine, herbals) and no artificial sweeteners is recommended. Water can be frozen in a plastic bottle and used to keep lunches cold. Be sure to wash the water bottle every day.

Milk: Milk is a very important source of vitamin D and calcium, vitamins and minerals children need to grow strong bones and teeth. Participating in a School Milk Program is a good way to be sure your child gets milk during the school day.

Unsweetened fruit or vegetable juices: Check the package label to be sure you are getting 100% fruit or vegetable juice. Even if fruit beverages have added nutrients, they are not as nourishing as 100% fruit juice.

There are many different kinds of 100% juices:
  – orange
  – apple
  – tomato
  – pineapple
  – vegetable blends
  – grapefruit
  – cranberry juice
  – grape (either white or purple)

Don’t let juice replace other nourishing foods. One serving of juice is small—just 125 mL or 1/2 cup. Many juice packs contain more than 500 mL, which counts as four servings of fruits or vegetables. Think about giving your child smaller, 250 mL juice packs to be sure that juice doesn’t replace other nourishing foods and beverages.

Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide recommends choosing vegetables and fruits more often than juices.
The chart above shows how many Food Guide Servings you need from each of the four food groups every day.

Having the amount and type of food recommended and following the tips in Canada’s Food Guide will help:

- Meet your needs for vitamins, minerals and other nutrients.
- Reduce your risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, certain types of cancer and osteoporosis.
- Contribute to your overall health and vitality.
What is One Food Guide Serving?
Look at the examples below.

- **Fresh, frozen or canned vegetables**: 125 mL (1/2 cup)
- **Leafy vegetables**: Cooked: 125 mL (1/4 cup)
  - Raw: 250 mL (1 cup)
- **Fresh, frozen or canned fruits**: 1 fruit or 125 mL (1/2 cup)
- **100% Juice**: 125 mL (1/4 cup)
- **Bagel**: 1/2 bagel (45 g)
- **Flat breads**: 1/2 pita or 1/2 tortilla (35 g)
- **100% Juice**: 125 mL (1/2 cup)
- **Cooked pasta or couscous**: 125 mL (1/2 cup)
- **Bread**: 1 slice (35 g)
- **Kefir**: 175 g (3/4 cup)
- **Cheese**: 50 g (1 1/2 oz.)
- **Cold milk or powdered milk (reconstituted)**: 250 mL (1 cup)
- **Canned milk (evaporated)**: 125 mL (1/4 cup)
- **Fortified soy beverage**: 250 mL (1 cup)
- **Yogurt**: 175 g (3/4 cup)
- **Kefir**: 175 g (3/4 cup)
- **Cooked fish, shellfish, poultry, lean meat**: 75 g (2 1/2 oz.)/125 mL (1/4 cup)
- **Cooked legumes**: 175 mL (3/4 cup)
- **Tofu**: 150 g or 175 mL (3/4 cup)
- **Eggs**: 2 eggs
- **Peanut or nut butters**: 30 mL (2 Tbsp)
- **Shelled nuts and seeds**: 60 mL (3/4 cup)

**Oils and Fats**
- Include a small amount – 30 to 45 mL (2 to 3 Tbsp) – of unsaturated fat each day. This includes oil used for cooking, salad dressings, margarine and mayonnaise.
- Use vegetable oils such as canola, olive and soybean.
- Choose soft margarines that are low in saturated and trans fats.
- Limit butter, hard margarine, lard and shortening.
Make each Food Guide Serving count... wherever you are – at home, at school, at work or when eating out!

- Eat at least one dark green and one orange vegetable each day.
  - Go for dark green vegetables such as broccoli, romaine lettuce and spinach.
  - Go for orange vegetables such as carrots, sweet potatoes and winter squash.
- Choose vegetables and fruit prepared with little or no added fat, sugar or salt.
  - Enjoy vegetables steamed, baked or stir-fried instead of deep-fried.
- Have vegetables and fruit more often than juice.

- Make at least half of your grain products whole grain each day.
  - Eat a variety of whole grains such as barley, brown rice, oats, quinoa and wild rice.
  - Enjoy whole grain breads, oatmeal or whole wheat pasta.
- Choose grain products that are lower in fat, sugar or salt.
  - Compare the Nutrition Facts table on labels to make wise choices.
  - Enjoy the true taste of grain products. When adding sauces or spreads, use small amounts.

- Drink skim, 1%, or 2% milk each day.
  - Have 500 mL (2 cups) of milk every day for adequate vitamin D.
  - Drink fortified soy beverages if you do not drink milk.
- Select lower fat milk alternatives.
  - Compare the Nutrition Facts table on yogurts or cheeses to make wise choices.

- Have meat alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu often.
- Eat at least two Food Guide Servings of fish each week.*
  - Choose fish such as char, herring, mackerel, salmon, sardines and trout.
- Select lean meat and alternatives prepared with little or no added fat or salt.
  - Trim the visible fat from meats. Remove the skin on poultry.
  - Use cooking methods such as roasting, baking or poaching that require little or no added fat.
  - If you eat luncheon meats, sausages or prepackaged meats, choose those lower in salt (sodium) and fat.

Enjoy a variety of foods from the four food groups.

Satisfy your thirst with water!

Drink water regularly. It’s a calorie-free way to quench your thirst. Drink more water in hot weather or when you are very active.

* Health Canada provides advice for limiting exposure to mercury from certain types of fish. Refer to www.healthcanada.gc.ca for the latest information.
Advice for different ages and stages...

Children

Following Canada’s Food Guide helps children grow and thrive.

- Young children have small appetites and need calories for growth and development.
- Serve small nutritious meals and snacks each day.
- Do not restrict nutritious foods because of their fat content. Offer a variety of foods from the four food groups.
- Most of all... be a good role model.

Women of childbearing age

All women who could become pregnant and those who are pregnant or breastfeeding need a multivitamin containing folic acid every day. Pregnant women need to ensure that their multivitamin also contains iron. A health care professional can help you find the multivitamin that’s right for you.

Pregnant and breastfeeding women need more calories. Include an extra 2 to 3 Food Guide Servings each day.

Here are two examples:
- Have fruit and yogurt for a snack, or
- Have an extra slice of toast at breakfast and an extra glass of milk at supper.

Men and women over 50

The need for vitamin D increases after the age of 50.

In addition to following Canada’s Food Guide, everyone over the age of 50 should take a daily vitamin D supplement of 10 µg (400 IU).

How do I count Food Guide Servings in a meal?

Here is an example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetable and beef stir-fry with rice, a glass of milk and an apple for dessert</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>250 mL (1 cup) mixed broccoli, carrot and sweet red pepper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 g (2 1/2 oz.) lean beef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250 mL (1 cup) brown rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 mL (1 tsp) canola oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250 mL (1 cup) 1% milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 apple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eat well and be active today and every day!

The benefits of eating well and being active include:
- Better overall health.
- Lower risk of disease.
- A healthy body weight.
- Feeling and looking better.
- More energy.
- Stronger muscles and bones.

Be active

To be active every day is a step towards better health and a healthy body weight.

It is recommended that adults accumulate at least 2 1/2 hours of moderate to vigorous physical activity each week and that children and youth accumulate at least 60 minutes per day. You don’t have to do it all at once. Choose a variety of activities spread throughout the week.

Start slowly and build up.

Eat well

Another important step towards better health and a healthy body weight is to follow Canada’s Food Guide by:
- Eating the recommended amount and type of food each day.
- Limiting foods and beverages high in calories, fat, sugar or salt (sodium) such as cakes and pastries, chocolate and candies, cookies and granola bars, doughnuts and muffins, ice cream and frozen desserts, french fries, potato chips, nachos and other salty snacks, alcohol, fruit flavoured drinks, soft drinks, sports and energy drinks, and sweetened hot or cold drinks.

Read the label

- Compare the Nutrition Facts table on food labels to choose products that contain less fat, saturated fat, trans fat, sugar and sodium.
- Keep in mind that the calories and nutrients listed are for the amount of food found at the top of the Nutrition Facts table.

Limit trans fat

When a Nutrition Facts table is not available, ask for nutrition information to choose foods lower in trans and saturated fats.

Take a step today…

- Have breakfast every day. It may help control your hunger later in the day.
- Walk wherever you can – get off the bus early, use the stairs.
- Benefit from eating vegetables and fruit at all meals and as snacks.
- Spend less time being inactive such as watching TV or playing computer games.
- Request nutrition information about menu items when eating out to help you make healthier choices.
- Enjoy eating with family and friends!
- Take time to eat and savour every bite!

For more information, interactive tools, or additional copies visit Canada’s Food Guide on-line at: www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide

or contact:
Publications
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Également disponible en français sous le titre :
Bien manger avec le Guide alimentaire canadien

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A Healthy Start to School - Keeping Kids Healthy

Ages and Stages
The years when children are starting school are a time of growth and change. Before your eyes, children get bigger and stronger. They’re able to do new things and begin to find new ways to get along with others. Going to school will help your child develop, but your role is still important.

Between the ages of 4 and 7, your child is developing physically, mentally and socially:

Physical Development Skills
• Bouncing a ball, walking backwards, skipping, hopping, marching and learning to ride a bike
• Using a knife and fork and learning to eat neatly and politely
• Learning to tie shoes, to print and write and develop more skill at drawing

Mental Development Processes
• Asking a lot of questions — how? what? why? Be patient and try to answer them.
• Talking and learning lots of new words to express ideas
• Acting and telling stories. Beginning to be much clearer about what’s real and what’s make-believe.
• Learning to count, to read, and to try to solve problems

Social Development Milestones
• Understanding and following rules
• Wanting to please, to help you and to take on responsibility. Wanting to be treated like big kids. Taking pride in what they are able to do.
• Needing attention and support. Some kids this age would rather talk than eat. They need to know someone cares enough to listen.
• Playing more complicated games and playing more and more with other kids. Keep an eye on the amount of time your children spend watching TV or videos. Make sure they have the chance to do many different things and to play with other kids.

These are interesting and exciting years for children and for parents! You and your school can do a lot to help your child develop physically, mentally and socially.
Self-Esteem

“Self-esteem” is the term that describes how people feel about themselves.

When children feel good about themselves, they have the confidence to try new things, to make new friends, and to respect others. Feeling good about themselves helps children to do well and to make good choices in their lives.

Every child is one of a kind. Every child has strengths and weaknesses, things they’re good at and things they don’t like to do. In order to grow up to be strong and healthy adults, children need to like themselves and to see themselves as worthwhile people. In other words, they need to have good self-esteem.

Parents have a big part to play in helping their children build self-esteem. You are the most important people in your children’s lives. Your opinion matters more than anyone else’s. All children need to know that their parents love and accept them as they are.

To help your kids feel good about themselves:

- **Let them know you love them.**
  - Say “I love you.”
  - Hug them, kiss them, pat them on the shoulder.
  - Smile when you see them coming.

- **Praise them.**
  - When they do something right, tell them. Don’t wait until they do something wrong and then criticize.
  - Praise them for trying, even if they don’t succeed. Effort counts, too.
  - Focus on the things your child does well, not on the things he or she isn’t as good at. Don’t compare your children. Each is special in their own way.

- **Give them jobs to do.**
  - Children feel good when they know you depend on them.
  - Praise them when they do their job well. If they don’t do their job, tell them you are disappointed. Give them a chance to do it right.

- **Respect them**
  - Listen when they talk to you. Let them know you think their ideas matter.
  - Ask them what they think.
  - Respect their feelings. Don’t make fun of them, pick on them, or belittle them.

Children who are loved and respected learn to love and respect themselves. They grow up to be people who love and respect others.
Body Image

How children feel about their body has a big effect on how they feel about themselves.

Children first see themselves through the eyes of the people they care about — their parents, caregivers, family members and friends. They develop good or bad feelings about their body based on the way others react to the way they look.

Parents play an important part in helping children develop a healthy body image.

• **Accept your children’s appearance and teach them that we all come in different shapes and sizes.** Focus and comment on your children’s many good qualities rather than on how they look. For example, praise qualities like their sense of humour, their kindness, how well they share with others and how much you enjoy their company.

• **Help your children to discover what their body can do and what they enjoy doing.** Explore a variety of activities like running, jumping, throwing, dancing, singing, playing music, drawing, and doing crafts. Try not to limit your children’s activities based on gender. It’s okay for girls to be interested in things like karate or for boys to be interested in dance.

Encourage an active family lifestyle by limiting the amount of time kids spend watching TV and playing video games. Give children the opportunity to swim, play, ride bikes and walk. Be active along with them.

Post photos of your children being active and having fun on the fridge or in another visible spot. This will let your kids know that you’re proud of them and remind them of activities they enjoy.

• **Do not accept unkind remarks about your child’s — or anyone else’s — appearance.** Being teased can make anyone feel bad about their body. If you find out that someone is making unkind comments about your child’s appearance, address it directly or through your child’s teacher.

If you find that your child is saying mean things to another child, don’t let it go. Take the opportunity to talk about how bad people feel when they get teased. Set a consequence for mean teasing to show your child that you will not accept it.

Be aware of the way that you feel and speak about your own body. Learning to accept and feel good about your own body will set a good example for your children.

• **Let your kids have a say in choosing their clothes and hairstyle.** This will allow them to feel that they have some control over their own body. Help them choose clothing that is comfortable, fits well and allows them to move freely, have fun and enjoy all the things their body can do.

Talk with a doctor, nutritionist, Public Health Nurse or nurse practitioner if you have concerns about a child’s weight, growth or body image.
Stress

As parents, most of us have some stress in our lives. We feel the pressures of raising children, of too little money, of too much to do, too little time and not enough help.

Children have stress in their lives, too. Starting school is exciting, but it’s also stressful. It takes a while to get used to new people, new rules and new routines.

As adults, we need to learn ways to handle the stress in our own lives. We need to find ways to relax, to slow down, to figure out what’s causing our stress and find a way to deal with it. We need to learn to talk about what’s bothering us and not bottle up our feelings.

We need to teach our children to do these things, too. Helping your children learn to manage stress will give them skills they can use all their lives.

What are the signs of stress?
In children, the signs of stress can be physical or behavioural. Nearly all children have some of these signs from time to time. Check with a health care provider to be sure there is no physical cause for them. If your child is in good health and the symptoms don’t go away, stress may be the cause.

Physical signs of stress:
• Headaches, stomach aches
• Trembling, nervous tics and twitches
• Teeth grinding (You may not see the grinding, but your child may complain of a sore jaw.)
• Becoming more clumsy or accident-prone
• Having to urinate often or wetting the bed

Behavioural signs of stress:
• Crankiness
• Doesn’t feel like doing anything
• Anxiety, nervousness
• Poor eating habits
• Watches TV all the time and doesn’t want to do anything else
• Has trouble sleeping or has nightmares

How can I help my children learn to handle stress?
The best way to help children deal with stress is to listen to them, love them and respect them. When children have a warm, loving family to come home to, they find it much easier to handle life’s ups and downs.

When your child is feeling stressed:
• Find out what’s causing the stress.  
Talk with your child. Find out why your child is upset. Listen to what he or she has to say.
  For example:
  – “Tommy never wants to play with me anymore.”
  – “I’m bad at sports.”

• Help pinpoint the problem.
When you talk it through, it may turn out that your child is making a small problem into a big crisis. Children can need help to keep things in perspective.
  For example:
  – Tommy has started taking music lessons after school on Tuesdays. Tommy and your child used to play on Tuesdays. Help your child see that the problem isn’t that Tommy never wants to play, but that he can’t play at that particular time anymore.
  – Your child didn’t get picked to play basketball on the school team. Help her see that this doesn’t mean she’s bad at all sports or even that she’s bad at basketball. The problem is that lots of kids try out but only a few get picked.
• **Help your child think about what to do.**  
Once you’ve sorted out the problem together, help your child find a way to handle it.  
*For example:*  
- If Tommy can’t play on Tuesday afternoon anymore, maybe he could come to play on Wednesday, or come home for lunch with your child once in a while.  
- If your child can’t play on the school team, maybe there’s another basketball team she can play on. Or maybe she’d like to try another kind of team. Or take lessons in another sport, like swimming or karate. Or maybe she’d like to do something completely different. Every child is good at something. Help your child find his or her special skills.

If you feel that your child needs more help in handling stress than you are able to give, talk with your health care provider or contact the local mental health clinic.

**Being Active**

Many children do not get as much physical activity as they need to grow and be healthy.

Children are spending more time in cars and more time sitting. They move less when they play and spend less time outdoors. On average, children in Nova Scotia spend over five hours a day watching television, playing video games, and using the internet outside of class time.

Children need both moderate and vigorous activity.

- During **moderate activities**, children sweat a little and breathe harder. Riding a bike and playing on a playground are moderate activities.
- During **vigorous activities**, children sweat a lot and are out of breath. Running and swimming are vigorous activities.

Getting at least 60 minutes of moderate and vigorous activity each day helps kids in many ways.

- Helps kids do better in school
- Helps kids grow and be healthy
- Increases self-esteem and helps kids feel good about themselves
- Helps kids feel better physically and mentally
- Helps children learn new skills and become more skillful at sports and physical activities
- Gives kids positive things to do in their spare time, keeps them from being bored and gives them a way to have fun with their friends
- Helps maintain a healthy body weight

By encouraging children to be active, parents can start a pattern that their children will continue to enjoy as they grow up.

- Encourage your child to be active every day of the week.
- Show your kids that you enjoy being active too.
- Limit screen time. Children should spend no more than two hours a day on the computer, playing video games, and watching television.

**Being Active Getting To and From School**

One of the best ways to make physical activity a habit and regular part of your child’s day is to choose an active way to get places. Children enjoy walking, cycling or riding a push scooter to school. It is a chance to enjoy nature and burn energy before sitting in class.

If taking the bus is your child’s only way to get to school, think about making an after-school walk or bike ride part of each day.
Being Active at School
Physical education and health education are both important parts of children’s schooling. When you ask your child what they learned at school, ask about these classes too.

Doing physical activity throughout the day is best. Recess and lunch breaks are key times for your child to play actively. Put an active toy, like a skipping rope or ball, in your child’s backpack. Dress your child in clothes and shoes that allow him or her to move freely. Ask school staff what the school does to encourage physically active play.

Being Active After School and On Weekends
By itself, physical education class is not enough physical activity for children. Children learn physical skills by using them in different situations. Time after school and on weekends is when children can be active for longer periods and try different activities. Some activities children most often learn with their parents — like cycling, swimming, skating or sledding.

Plan family activities around physical activity.
• Walk or bicycle together instead of driving.
• Make active chores like vacuuming and yard work fun by doing them together.
• Give children time and chances to play outside.
• Include fun physical activities and games in family events like birthday parties, picnics, reunions and vacations.
• Take children to local playgrounds, parks, trails, nature reserves, recreation centres and fields.

Ask after-school caregivers to play actively with your child. Arrange playtime with friends. Look for organized activities at school, community centres, the municipal recreation department, children’s organizations and clubs. Organized activities should focus on fun, learning and growing, not competition. Children benefit from trying outdoor recreation, dance, active games and sport.

Volunteering is a way to be more active yourself while making more activities available to all the kids in your community. Some schools have groups of parents and staff who help make schools healthy and active for children.

To find out about recreation and sport opportunities in your community:
• Contact your municipality to ask about recreation and sport programs for children.
• Connect to online information from your local recreation department at recreationns.ns.ca
• Contact local organizations such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, 4H and sport clubs.
• Check with your schools about after-school programs and lunchtime activities.

Some regions have an active living directory:
• capebretenonconnect.ca
• highlandconnect.ca
• southshoreconnect.ca
• valleyconnect.ca
Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines

FOR CHILDREN - 5 – 11 YEARS

Guidelines

For health benefits, children aged 5-11 years should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily. This should include:

- Vigorous-intensity activities at least 3 days per week.
- Activities that strengthen muscle and bone at least 3 days per week.
- More daily physical activity provides greater health benefits.

Let’s Talk Intensity!

Moderate-intensity physical activities will cause children to sweat a little and to breathe harder. Activities like:

- Bike riding
- Playground activities

Vigorous-intensity physical activities will cause children to sweat and be ‘out of breath’. Activities like:

- Running
- Swimming

Being active for at least 60 minutes daily can help children:

- Improve their health
- Do better in school
- Improve their fitness
- Grow stronger
- Have fun playing with friends
- Feel happier
- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Improve their self-confidence
- Learn new skills

Parents and caregivers can help to plan their child’s daily activity. Kids can:

- Play tag – or freeze-tag!
- Go to the playground after school.
- Walk, bike, rollerblade or skateboard to school.

- Play an active game at recess.
- Go sledding in the park on the weekend.
- Go “puddle hopping” on a rainy day.

60 minutes a day. You can help your child get there!

Source: Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines, © 2011. Used with permission from the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, www.csep.ca/guidelines
Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines

FOR CHILDREN - 5 – 11 YEARS

Guidelines

For health benefits, children aged 5–11 years should minimize the time they spend being sedentary each day. This may be achieved by:

- Limiting recreational screen time to no more than 2 hours per day; lower levels are associated with additional health benefits.
- Limiting sedentary (motorized) transport, extended sitting and time spent indoors throughout the day.

The lowdown on the slowdown: what counts as being sedentary?

Sedentary behaviour is time when children are doing very little physical movement. Some examples are:

- Sitting for long periods
- Using motorized transportation (such as a bus or a car)
- Watching television
- Playing passive video games
- Playing on the computer

Spending less time being sedentary can help children:

- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Do better in school
- Improve their self-confidence
- Have more fun with their friends
- Improve their fitness
- Have more time to learn new skills

Cutting down on sitting down. Help children swap sedentary time with active time!

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Active Transportation
Instead of driving, walk to school with a group of kids from the neighbourhood.

Active Play
Limit after school TV watching. Play time outdoors instead.

Active Family Time
Instead of video games in the evening, introduce the family to a new active game.

There is no time like right now for children to get up and get moving!

Source: Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Children and Youth, © 2011. Used with permission from the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, www.csep.ca/guidelines
Discipline

Discipline is not just another word for punishment. Discipline means teaching children to behave. It means helping them to learn what you expect them to do and how you expect them to act.

There’s a lot you can do to help your children learn to behave.

Make rules and stick to them.

- Make as few rules as possible and repeat them often. Be sure your children understand what the rules are and what they mean.
  
  For example:
  “You need to get up when I call you in the morning so you can catch the bus to school.”

- Tell your children what will happen if they break the rules.
  
  For example:
  “If you’re too tired to get up when I call, we’ll have to make your bedtime earlier.”

- Follow through. Let your children live with the results if they break the rules.
  
  For example:
  “You know the rule. I had to come upstairs and get you out of bed so you wouldn’t miss the bus. We’ll make your bedtime a half hour earlier. When you show me you can get up three days in a row, we can move it back.”

Praise them when they follow the rules or do what they’re supposed to do.

- Don’t wait until they break a rule to notice them. Praise them when they follow the rules or do what they’re supposed to do.
  
  For example:
  “You’ve been getting up in the morning like a champ! Nice going! You make our mornings nice!”

Set a good example.

- Children learn almost everything by watching what other people do. This means that they can learn from your bad example just as well as from your good example.
  
  For example:
  - If you want your kids to be polite to others, let them see you saying “Please” and “Thank you.”
  - If you want your kids to be kind and to share with others, let them see you being kind and sharing.

What can I do if they don’t behave?

When children misbehave, you can try:

- Taking away a treat or a privilege
- Sending them to their room or a quiet place for a short time
- Explaining what you didn’t like about their behaviour

One thing you should NOT do when children misbehave is spank them. Spanking does not teach good behaviour. It teaches children to be afraid of and dislike the person who hits them.

When you talk with your children about their misbehaviour, make sure they understand that while you’re not happy about what they did (or didn’t) do, you will always love them.

For example:

- Say: “I asked you to take out the trash. I’m disappointed that you haven’t done it. Please take it out now.”
DON’T say: “You didn’t take out the trash. Are you too stupid to remember anything?”

Remember, nobody’s perfect. No parent does everything right all the time. All parents have times when they do or say something they’re sorry for. We all make mistakes, and we can all learn from our mistakes.

When you do or say something you wish you hadn’t, apologize to your child.

For example:

Say: “I’m sorry I yelled at you. Let’s try again.”

Your children always deserve another chance and so do you.

Talking to Your Kids About Sexuality

Sexuality is much more than sex. It includes our sense of who we are and how we feel about ourselves as sexual beings.

As a parent, you are your children’s first and most important sexuality educator. You teach your child by what you do and say. The tone of your voice and the feelings you express are as important as the words you use.

You have a wonderful opportunity to help your child grow up to be a respectful, loving, caring, sexually healthy adult.

It’s not unusual for parents to feel uncomfortable talking with their children about sexuality. You may find it difficult if you grew up with negative messages or confusing information about sexuality. You can increase your comfort level by reading books on sexuality education for children. This will help you to become more knowledgeable and also to learn language and explanations that are appropriate for your child. Teaching your children about sexuality is an important part of their healthy development.

Why parents need to teach their children about sexuality

• **Children are curious about sexuality.** Children are naturally curious about themselves and others. This may lead to sexual exploration with other children such as looking at another child’s body or genitals. They are learning the differences between boys and girls—and what’s the same. Most sexual exploration among children is normal.

• **Children see things around them that are confusing.** As children grow, they learn about sexuality from many sources—for example, friends, TV, movies, Internet, video games and school. Sexy images and messages in advertising are everywhere and children are learning from them.

• **Children need to learn their family and cultural values.** Schools don’t teach values. As your child learns to read and becomes more independent, you have less control over what they hear and see. It is important to find out what your child is learning in school, from friends and the media. Discuss your values and your feelings about the sexual messages they get from the world around them. Teach your child what is appropriate and acceptable behaviour for their age.

If you find conflict between what your child is learning outside your home and your family’s values you may want to reaffirm your own values with your child. You may find it helpful to talk to your health care provider, your child’s school or Public Health staff.
• **Children need to learn the words to use when talking about sexuality and their body.** It is important to give your child correct words for all parts of the body. Teach them socially acceptable and commonly understood words—for example, penis, testicles, vulva and vagina. These are words they will keep using when they start school.

• **It promotes sexual health and has a protective effect.** When children are exposed to age-appropriate sexuality information from a young age, they are more likely to delay sexual involvement until they are older and to have safer and healthier experiences when they do eventually become sexually active.

Children start learning about sexuality from the time they are born—and they keep learning about it for the rest of their life. When you welcome their questions, children learn that they can come to you when something is confusing instead of turning to sources that may not give accurate or caring answers.

**How to talk to your child about sexuality**

• **Find a time and place that is comfortable** for you and your child to talk such as at bedtime or when you are walking together. Find your own words, to fit your needs and those of your child.

• **Look for opportunities or teachable moments.** Answer whenever a child asks a question—even if the reply is, “Good question. We can talk about that later.” (Don’t forget to talk about it!) When there is an opportunity—take it. You might start a discussion about something you see on TV, if you see a pregnant woman, or if a pet has babies.

Remember that some children will ask questions but others will hesitate—you may need to start the conversation or ask the questions.

• **Acknowledge when you feel uncomfortable, embarrassed or you don’t know an answer.** It’s okay to feel this way, and it’s okay to say you don’t know something.

• **Take time to think about how to answer a child’s question.** This could be a few minutes or a few days, as long as you help your child get an answer. You may want to talk with another adult about how you might answer a difficult question, or consult a book on the issue. If you aren’t satisfied with the information you give or the way you handle a situation, explain this to your child and start again.

• **Be honest.** If you give your child misinformation, sooner or later your child will learn that you didn’t tell the truth. Your child could be embarrassed if he or she repeats incorrect information in front of others who then make fun of him or her.

  “Remember when I told you that condoms are a type of balloon? Well, condoms are really used by people to keep from having a baby or getting an infection.”

• **Be consistent.** If two parents are raising the child, make sure you talk over what you want to say. Conflicting messages can be confusing.

**When you talk to your child:**

• **Make your answers short and simple.** You do not need to know everything about sexuality to teach your child what he or she wants to know. You can find out any information you don’t know.

• **Be clear about what your child really wants to know before you answer.**

  Child: “Where do babies come from?”
  Parent: “Do you want to know where they grow?”
• Find out how much your child already knows.
Child: “What does ‘rape’ mean?”
Parent: “What do you think it means?”

• Clear up any wrong information your child may have.
Child: “I grew in Mommy’s stomach.”
Parent: “You grew in Mommy’s uterus.”

• Give information using words and ideas they can understand at their age. For example, if a four-year-old child asks, “Where do babies come from?” you could reply, “Babies are made with sperm from a man and an egg from a woman and grow in a special place in a woman’s body called a ‘uterus’.”

Where to go for more information
You can get more information about talking to your kids about sexuality from your local Public Health Services office. If you have questions, you can ask for the booklet “Talk Sex” or you can talk with a Public Health Nurse. The addresses of these offices are listed in the back of this booklet. Once your child starts school, you can talk to your child’s teacher about what sexual health education topics will be addressed in class so you can complement your child’s learning and prepare for any questions your child may have. Teachers may also be able to suggest age-appropriate books.

Safety
Starting school makes your child’s world more exciting and much bigger. Starting school also makes safety a much bigger issue because there is greater chance of your child being injured.

Safety is everyone’s concern. As a parent, you need to be aware of safety risks so that you can teach your child safety rules. You also need to set a good example by following safety rules yourself. For example, if you drive onto the school grounds, or even near the school grounds, you need to be extra careful.

It’s a good idea for parents to take a basic first aid course. There are also first aid courses for children. Contact your local St. John Ambulance or Red Cross for information about what’s available where you live.

Booster Seats in cars, vans, trucks and SUVs
In Nova Scotia, the law says that children who have outgrown their child car seat must use a booster seat until they are 9 years old or 145 cm (4 ft. 9 in.) tall. It’s safest if children stay in the booster seat until they are 145 cm (4 ft. 9 in.) tall, even if they are older than 9. Children must be a minimum of 18 kg (40 pounds) before they can start using a booster seat. Children who are under 18 kg (40 pounds) must use a child seat with harnessing.

Adult seat belts in cars, vans, trucks and SUV’s are too big for a child’s small body. Booster seats lift children up so that the seat belt fits safely over their body. When in a booster seat the shoulder belt crosses the middle of your child’s chest. Your child could be hurt or killed if the shoulder belt is behind their back or under their arm. The lap belt should be low and snug over the hips. Booster Seats can only be used in seating positions with a lap and shoulder belt, and never in a side facing seat.

There are two kinds of Booster Seats:
• High Back: These seats support the child’s head in cars with low-backed seats.
• Backless: These have just a seat. They are safe in cars with high-back seats.

Children should use a booster seat until the middle of their ears is above the top of the
car’s seat or the back of the high-back booster seat. If your child outgrows their booster seat before they reach 145 cm (4 ft. 9 in.), it’s time for a taller booster seat to stay safe.

Children are ready for an adult seat belt when:
- They are AT LEAST 145 cm (4 ft. 9 in.) tall or have a seated height of 74 cm (29 in.).
- The lap belt stays low across their hips—not their abdomen—when seated on the car’s seat.
- The shoulder belt fits across the middle of their chest (between the neck and the end of the shoulder) when seated on the car’s seat.
- They are tall enough for their legs to bend over the edge of the car’s seat while they are sitting up straight on the car’s seat.
- They can sit (on the car’s seat) with their back flat against the seat without slouching.

When driving in a car, van, truck or SUV, the safest spot for a child is in the back seat.

If you must put your child in the front seat, turn off the airbag.

To find out if it’s okay to use a car seat in the front seat of your car:
- Check your owner’s manual
- Call your car’s manufacturer
- Call Transport Canada at 1-800-333-0510 or go to their website: tc.gc.ca/roadsafety (Click on “Child Safety”)

Even after children have outgrown car and booster seats, it’s safest if they stay in the back seat until they’re 13.

For more information about car seat safety contact the Child Safety Link, at 1-866-288-1388 (toll free) or 902-470-6496 or visit their website at childsafetylink.ca.

(Adapted from Take the Booster Seat YES Test, Calgary Health Region)

Car Safety around Schools
With many cars arriving at school in the morning and afternoon, heavy traffic on and around the school grounds can be dangerous for students.
- If your children are not bussed to school, think about walking or cycling with them instead of driving.
- If you must drive, think about parking a block away. Your children can walk the rest of the way or you can walk with them.
- When you drop off your children, be sure they get out on the curb side of the car. If your children need to cross the street, be sure they cross the street where and when it is safe.
- Never stop in no-parking or no-stopping zones. Respect the rules school staff and police have made for traffic on and around the school grounds. These rules are there for the safety of all students.

Bike Safety
Make sure your children have a good strong bike, approved safety gear and know the rules for safe biking. Check with your local police or RCMP to find out about current standards and safety rules. Check with your school to find out their policy on riding bikes to school.

If your child’s school doesn’t have bike racks, talk with them about getting some.

Kids should:
- Have a safe bicycle. Children’s bikes should be the right size for them and should be checked often to make sure all parts are in good working order.
- Have safety gear. In Nova Scotia anyone riding a bicycle is required by law to wear a bicycle helmet. Children must wear a C.S.A., ASTM or SNELL approved helmet and always wear
footwear while biking. (Parents must wear a helmet, too!) On dark mornings and late afternoons, be sure your child wears reflective and light-coloured clothing so that drivers will see him or her clearly.

• **Know safety rules.**
  Make sure your children participate in bike safety training programs to improve their skills. These include: bike rodeos; the Kids CAN-BIKE course; and the Making Tracks cycling module. Go over safety rules with your children to make sure they remember them.

  Ask your child’s school to organize a Making Tracks safety skills module on cycling safety for students. You can learn more at: saferoutesns.ca

• **Ride in a safe place.**
  Children age 9 and under should not be allowed to ride a bike alone on a street. Children over age 9 should ride only on streets with little traffic.

**Playground Safety**
As with bike safety, playground safety depends on having safe equipment and following the rules. Check the playground at your child’s school and bring any problems to the school’s attention.

Safe playground equipment

• Playground equipment should be firmly attached to the ground. It should be in good repair and should be checked regularly. If the equipment is rusty or broken, report this to whoever is in charge of the playground and find another place to play until the problem is solved.

  • The ground around all playground equipment should be soft, not packed down and hard. Rubber, wood chips, pea gravel or sand make a good surface. There should never be concrete or asphalt around playground equipment.

  • Playgrounds should be clean. This means no animal dirt, broken glass or garbage.

Teach your child safe playground rules

• Take turns
• No pushing or shoving
• On the swing:
  – one person per swing
  – sit in the middle of the seat
  – hold on with both hands
  – never walk near a moving swing
• On the slide:
  – move away from the bottom after your turn
  – climb up the ladder, not up the slide
• On the teeter-totter:
  – sit down and hold on. Don’t stand
  – don’t hop off without telling the person on the other side

**Skateboarding and In-Line Skating Safety**
Before allowing your child to skateboard or in-line skate to school, find out from your municipal office if and where skating is allowed on sidewalks in your community.

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**Caution:** It is not safe for children to wear scarves and drawstrings on clothing on the playground. These can catch on playground equipment and strangle children. Children should also be told not to tie ropes to playground equipment and to remove their helmets before using playground equipment.
Skateboarding and in-line skating are not permitted on the roadways.

Check with your school to find out their policy on riding skateboards and in-line skates to school.

Check with your local police or RCMP to find out about current standards and safety rules.

Kids should:

- **Have a safe skateboard or in-line skates.** They should be the right size for them and should be checked often to make sure all parts are in good working order.

- **Have safety gear.** In Nova Scotia anyone skateboarding or in-line skating is required by law to wear a proper helmet. When skateboarding, they must wear an approved skateboard helmet. When in-line skating, they must wear an approved skateboard or bicycle helmet. Safety gear is a must, including elbow pads, kneepads and wrist guards. Children must always wear footwear while skating. (Parents must wear a helmet and safety gear, too!)

- **Know safety rules.** Request that your school or the local recreation department run a skateboarding or in-line skating safety skills module for kids. Learn more about Making Tracks Skate Pass® or Making Tracks In-Line Skating at saferoutesns.ca. Go over safety rules with children to make sure they remember them.

**Poison Prevention**

Did you know:

- Each year the IWK Regional Poison Centre receives over 10,000 calls. More than half of these calls involve children under 16.

- The average household has as many as 250 poisons. These include things like cleaners, pills, medicines, cosmetics, cigarettes, plants, paints, solvents and craft and art supplies.

- The top 3 products related to poisonings are pain relievers, cleaning products and sedatives.

- Most childhood poisonings can be prevented.

**To poison-proof your home:**

- **Learn to identify poisons in your home.** Learn to recognize the symbols for poisons, explosives and corrosive or flammable products. Teach your children to recognize these symbols, too. Check with a greenhouse or plant nursery, or with the IWK Regional Poison Centre, to find out if any of the plants in or around your home are poisonous.

- **Keep poisons out of reach of children.** Keep poisons locked away where children can’t reach them. This may require a lot of thought. You need to try to think like a child, and be several steps ahead. For example, children find poisons in purses, coat pockets, glove compartments, in medicine cabinets, in the garage, in the basement or under the kitchen sink. They taste cleaners, chew on art supplies and eat plants. They try to spray on perfume and get it in their eyes. Poisons are best stored in a high, locked cupboard.

In an emergency call 911 or the IWK Regional Poison Centre at 1-800-565-8161 or 902-470-8161.
Give Your Children a Smoke-Free Home and Car

One of the best things you can do for your children’s health is to give them a smoke-free home and car.

There is no level of tobacco smoke that is safe for your children. Tobacco smoke hurts children in several ways.

- **Second-hand smoke is smoke that children breathe in.** It’s smoke that you can see in the air. Second-hand smoke is even more dangerous for small children than for adults. Children have smaller lungs and they breathe more quickly. This means they breathe in more smoke.

- **Third-hand smoke is smoke that children pick up through their skin and mouths.** The poisons in tobacco smoke stick to everything they touch—for example, toys, clothes, sheets, towels, carpets, furniture, and dishes. Children are exposed to third-hand smoke just by living in a house where people smoke. They play on the floor, climb on furniture, play with toys, and touch clothes, sheets and towels that are all covered with third-hand smoke. These poisons stay around for a long time. When someone smokes in a house or car, the third-hand smoke they leave behind can affect children months later.

There is a link between children who live with tobacco smoke and several serious illnesses. These include:
- Childhood cancer
- Leukemia
- Brain cancer
- Ear and lung infections
- Asthma

In Nova Scotia, it is illegal to smoke in a car with children present. Second- and third-hand smoke in cars is even more dangerous than smoke indoors. The smoke in a car builds up quickly, even with the window down. Smoking in the small space inside a car is 23 times more toxic than smoking in a home. Even if you only smoke in your car when your children aren’t present, they will be exposed to the third-hand smoke building up on the car seats and upholstery.

Your children can’t control the amount of second- and third-hand smoke they’re exposed to. Only you can do that. Air exchangers and open windows will not protect your children. The only way to protect them is to make sure no one smokes in your home or your car.

Ask others who care about your children not to smoke in their home when your children are there. Remind them that it’s illegal to smoke in their car when a child is present.

For information on making your home smoke-free, contact your local Public Health Services office.

For information about stopping smoking, you can call the Smokers’ Helpline at 1-877-513-5333 (toll free) or contact Addiction Services (addictionservices.ns.ca).

All children deserve to be protected from tobacco smoke!
Preventing Smoking

Did you know:
• Every year, 1,600 Nova Scotians die from the effects of smoking.
• Nicotine is so addictive that 8 out of 10 people who try smoking get hooked.

Taking steps now to prevent your children from ever starting to smoke, is one of the healthiest things you can do for them.

What you say and do about smoking can encourage and support your children’s decision to be smoke-free.

To keep your children from smoking:
• Be a non-smoker yourself. Your example is your children’s most powerful teacher. If you smoke, quit now. You can find out about “stop smoking” programs from your health care provider, local Public Health Services office or local Addiction Services.

• Be honest with your children about the risks smokers take. If you smoke, talk with your children about how hard it is to stop smoking. If you’ve tried to stop in the past, and failed, tell them how difficult it was for you.

• Help your children to say “no” to smoking. Talk with them about the advertising they’ll see and the pressure they might get from friends to try smoking. Help them learn ways to say “No.”

• Respect anti-smoking laws. Your attitude towards smoking affects your children’s attitude. If you respect rules about not smoking in hospitals, schools, workplaces, vehicles with children present and other public spaces, your children will learn to respect these laws (and other laws, too). It’s also important that you respect, and teach your children to respect, the laws that make it illegal to sell tobacco products to people under 19.

Sun Protection

Preventing sunburn in childhood can make it much less likely that children will develop skin cancer later in life.

If your child is taking medication, check with your health care provider or pharmacist before allowing him or her to go out in the sun. Choose clothing that is loose fitting, tight woven and light weight. Some kinds of medication can make children very sensitive to the sun. If your child is sensitive to the sun, be sure to let the school know.

Good sense in the sun:
• Use a sunscreen all year round.
  - Choose a broad-spectrum sunscreen that is SPF 15 or higher. Read the label to be sure it screens out both kinds of ultraviolet rays: ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB). NEVER use baby oil as a sunscreen.
  - Apply sunscreen carefully. Pay special attention to the face, ears, nose and the tops of the feet.
  - Apply sunscreen BEFORE your children go outside. Between 15 and 20 minutes before going out is best.
  - Reapply sunscreen at least every 2 hours while your children are playing outside. You should also reapply after swimming or exercising that makes them perspire.
• **Dress to protect.** Don’t depend on sunscreen alone to protect your children.
  - Be sure children wear a wide brimmed hat, shirt and pants while playing outdoors. Choose clothing that is loose fitting, tight woven and light weight.
  - Remember that sheer clothing will allow the sun to pass through.

• **Watch the time of day.**
  - Children should not play unprotected in the sun between 11 AM and 4 PM or when the UV index is 3 or more. The sun is most dangerous during these times.
  - Encourage kids to play in the shade, especially between 11 AM and 4 PM or when the UV index is 3 or more.

• **Be careful on cloudy days, too.**
  - Even on cloudy days, most of the sun’s rays reach the ground. You can get a serious sunburn on a cloudy day.
  - You can also get a sunburn from sunlight reflecting from snow, water or sand.

• **Wear sunglasses**
  Sunglasses can help prevent eye damage by blocking a large amount of ultraviolet rays. Choose sunglasses with: even shading, medium to dark lenses (grey, brown or green tint), and UV-A and UV-B protection.

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**Sun safety means:**

• Wearing clothes that cover arms and legs
• Wearing a wide-brim hat
• Using a sunscreen that is SPF 15 or higher
• Wearing sunglasses with UV-A and UV-B protection.
Preventing the Spread of Illness

Hand Washing

Hand washing is the most important way to help children stay healthy and prevent the spread of illness. Children should learn to wash their hands often and well. Teach your children at home, so they will be able to wash properly at school.

Teach your children to wash their hands:
• **Before** - eating  
• **After** - using the toilet  
  - playing outdoors  
  - playing with pets, especially with reptiles like snakes, lizards and turtles  
  - visiting someone who is sick  
  - coughing or sneezing

To wash hands well:
1. **WET** hands under warm running water.
2. **SCRUB** with soap. Slowly count for 5 to 10 seconds while scrubbing.
3. **LOOK** to be sure all parts of your hand are clean. Check the backs, between the fingers and under the nails.
4. **RINSE** under running water. Slowly count for 5 to 10 seconds while rinsing.
5. **DRY**.

Help Stop Illness from Spreading

Illnesses can spread easily among children who spend time together in a classroom. In addition to teaching your children how and when to wash their hands, there are several other things you can do to help them learn to prevent the spread of illness.

• Teach your children to cough and sneeze into their arm or sleeve. They can use tissues to cover coughs and sneezes but need to be sure to wash their hands after throwing out the tissue.

• Teach your children not to share drinking glasses, water bottles, mouth guards, food or eating utensils when they are sick.

If your children are sick, keep them home from school. They should avoid close contact with others until they are feeling well and are able to resume normal day-to-day activities.

Common signs of sickness are:
- Changes in behaviour. A change in a child’s behaviour is a clear sign that he or she is not well.
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Fever
- Rash
- Coughing up coloured phlegm
Washing your hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce the spread of germs.

Wash all parts of your hands:
- the backs
- between fingers
- under nails
- thumbs

Wash your hands:
- Before eating
- After using the toilet
- Before, during and after cooking
- After changing diapers
- After handling soiled items such as bed linen, commodes, clothing, and toys.
- After petting animals
When children have been home sick, you need to be sure they stay home until they are well enough that they won’t pass the illness to other children when they return to school. If your child gets any contagious disease you should tell your school.

**Facts about Some Common Childhood Illnesses**

When your children start school, you may find that you’re hearing about childhood illnesses that are new to you.

One question many parents have is how to tell the difference between a cold and the flu. These are not the same illness. The flu is usually more serious.

A cold and the flu have several of the same symptoms: runny, stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat and coughing. The big difference is that a child with the flu will also have a high fever that can last 3 or 4 days, a headache, body aches and will often feel very weak and tired.

A cold is usually over sooner than the flu — a child with the flu can be sick for as long as 10 days.

For more information on childhood illness, please visit the following websites:
- Canadian Paediatric Society: [caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/illnesses-index](caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/illnesses-index)
- Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness: [novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/communicable-diseases.asp](novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/communicable-diseases.asp)
For More Information

For this and other publications produced by the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness visit our web page at: novascotia.ca/dhw or contact one of the following Public Health Services offices:

**Amherst**
18 South Albion Street
902-667-3319
or 1-800-767-3319

**Annapolis Royal**
Annapolis Community Health Centre
821 St. George Street
902-532-0490

**Antigonish**
23 Bay Street, suite 2N
902-867-4500 ext. 4800

**Baddeck**
Victoria County Memorial Hospital
30 Old Margaree Road
902-295-2178

**Barrington Passage**
3695 Highway 3
902-637-2430

**Berwick**
Western Kings Memorial Health Centre
121 Orchard Street
902-538-3700

**Bridgewater**
215 Dominion Street
Suite 200
902-543-0850

**Canso**
Eastern Memorial Hospital
1746 Union Street
902-366-2925

**Chester**
109 Duke Street
902-275-3581

**Cheticamp**
Sacred Heart Community Health Centre
15102 Cabot Trail
902-224-2410

**Digby**
Digby General Hospital
75 Warwick Street
3rd floor
902-245-2557

**Elmsdale**
15 Commerce Court
Suite 150
902-883-3500

**Glace Bay**
Senator’s Place
633 Main Street
Ground floor
902-842-4050

**Guysborough**
Guysborough Hospital
10506 Highway 16
902-533-3502

**Halifax**
7 Mellor Ave., Unit 5
Burnside
902-481-5800

**Inverness**
Inverness Consolidated Memorial Hospital
39 James Street
902-258-1920

**Liverpool**
Queen’s General Hospital
175 School Street
902-354-5737

**Lunenburg**
250 Green Street
902-634-4014

**Meteghan Centre**
Clare Health Centre
8559 Highway 1
902-645-2325

**Middle Musquodoboit**
Musquodoboit Valley Memorial Hospital
492 Archibald Brook Road
902-384-2370

**Middleton**
Soldier’s Memorial Hospital
462 Main Street
902-825-3385

**Musquodoboit Harbour**
7907 Highway 7
902-889-2143

**Neil’s Harbour**
Buchanan Memorial Community Health Centre
902-336-2295
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Address</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Germany</td>
<td>New Germany and Area Medical Centre</td>
<td>100 Varner Road</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>902-644-2710</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Glasgow</td>
<td>Community Health Centre</td>
<td>690 East River Road</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>902-752-5151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Waterford</td>
<td>New Waterford Consolidated Hospital</td>
<td>716 King Street</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>902-862-2204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Hawkesbury</td>
<td>708 Reeves Street, unit 3</td>
<td>902-625-1693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheet Harbour</td>
<td>Eastern Shore Medical Hospital 22637 Highway 7</td>
<td>902-885-2470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelburne</td>
<td>Roseway Hospital 1606 Lake Road 902-875-2623</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>235 Townsend Street 2nd floor 902-563-2400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sydney Mines</td>
<td>7 Fraser Avenue 902-736-6245</td>
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<tr>
<td>Truro</td>
<td>Colchester East Hants Health Centre 600 Abenaki Road</td>
<td>902-893-5820</td>
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<tr>
<td>Windsor</td>
<td>Hants Community Hospital 89 Payzant Drive</td>
<td>902-798-2264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolfville</td>
<td>Eastern Kings Memorial Community Health Centre 23 Earnsliffe Avenue</td>
<td>902-542-6310</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yarmouth</td>
<td>Yarmouth Regional Hospital 60 Vancouver Street</td>
<td>902-742-7141</td>
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**Mental Health Services Clinics**

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<th>Town</th>
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<tr>
<td>Amherst</td>
<td>Cumberland Healthcare Centre 33 Havelock Street</td>
<td>902-667-3879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antigonish</td>
<td>St. Martha’s Regional Hospital 25 Bay Street</td>
<td>902-863-2830 ext. 4345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgewater</td>
<td>Dawson Centre, Level 2 197 Dufferin Street</td>
<td>902-543-5400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halifax</td>
<td>IWK Health Centre 5850–5980 University Ave</td>
<td>902-464-4110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentville</td>
<td>Valley Regional Hospital Chipman Clinic 15 Chipman Drive</td>
<td>902-679-2870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Glasgow</td>
<td>Community Health Centre 690 East River Road</td>
<td>902-755-1137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>Cape Breton Regional Hospital 1482 George Street</td>
<td>902-567-7730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truro</td>
<td>Colchester East Hants Health Centre 600 Abenaki Road</td>
<td>902-893-5526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarmouth</td>
<td>Yarmouth Regional Hospital 60 Vancouver Street</td>
<td>902-742-4222</td>
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### Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech Clinics

Clinic locations labeled “A” offer hearing testing and services (Audiology). Locations labeled “S” offer speech and language services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact Number</th>
<th>Services</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Halifax</td>
<td>902-423-7354</td>
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<tr>
<td>IWK Health Centre</td>
<td>902-470-7146</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>IWK Newborn Hearing</td>
<td>902-470-7146</td>
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<td>Amherst</td>
<td>902-667-1141</td>
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<tr>
<td>Antigonish</td>
<td>902-867-4197</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bridgewater</td>
<td>902-543-4603, ext. 2248</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dartmouth</td>
<td>902-464-3084</td>
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<tr>
<td>Digby</td>
<td>902-245-2501, ext. 265</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evanston</td>
<td>902-625-3100, ext. 257</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glace Bay</td>
<td>902-842-2868</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentville</td>
<td>902-678-7381, ext. 1400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>902-345-3436, ext. 246</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower Sackville</td>
<td>902-869-6150</td>
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<td>Middleton</td>
<td>902-825-3411, ext. 233</td>
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<td>Musquodoboit Hbr.</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Glasgow</td>
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<td>Pictou</td>
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<td>Sheet Harbour</td>
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<td>Shelburne</td>
<td>902-875-3011, ext. 270</td>
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<td>Springhill</td>
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<td>Sydney Mines</td>
<td>902-736-2831, ext. 146</td>
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<td>Truro</td>
<td>902-893-5512, ext. 512</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waterville</td>
<td>902-538-3103, ext. 156</td>
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<tr>
<td>Windsor</td>
<td>902-792-2084</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yarmouth</td>
<td>902-742-3541, ext. 364</td>
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How to Prevent, Find, and Treat Head Lice
What Are Head Lice?
Head lice are tiny insects that live on the head. They lay eggs (called nits) close to the scalp. Head lice do not spread disease, and having head lice does not mean that you are not clean. Head lice are very common among children. Scratching the head can be a sign of head lice, but you can have head lice without any itching.

How Is Head Lice Spread?
Head lice spread through direct contact among children (head-to-head), or indirectly on items such as hats, combs, hairbrushes, headbands, helmets, and toques.

Head lice
• do not jump, fly, or hop, but they crawl very quickly
• cannot live on pets or other animals
• can live off the head for up to 3 days, but their eggs, the nits, need a warm environment to develop—nits are not likely to hatch at room temperature

How to Prevent the Spread of Head Lice
• Check your child’s head regularly:
  – once a week as part of your routine
  – after every sleepover
  – every day during lice outbreaks at school
• Keep long hair tied back or braided.
• Teach your child not to share personal items that are used on their head. This means things like brushes, combs, barrettes, headbands, elastics, towels, hats, helmets, toques, and scarves.
• Teach your child to put their hats and scarves in their coat sleeves or backpacks when they take them off at school.

If your child has been in contact with someone who has lice, you need to check your child’s head carefully to see if they have caught lice. Head lice spread easily, so if one person in the household has lice, others may have it too. **Check everyone** in the household on the same day.

**Check for head lice once a week.**
How to Check for Head Lice

**What you need**

- bright light
- regular comb
- lice comb, a special fine-tooth comb available at any drug store
- hair conditioner—white is best
- paper tissues—white is best
- plastic bag for garbage

**What to look for**

You are looking for both live head lice, called climbers, and the lice eggs, called nits.

- Adult lice are 2 to 4 mm long, or about the size of a sesame seed. Lice move quickly and can be difficult to see, so it’s more likely that you’ll see nits.

- Nits are shaped like tiny teardrops and have a brownish white colour. They are about the size of a poppy seed. They are stuck firmly to individual hairs and will not move unless you pull them from the hair with your fingernails or a nit comb.

**What to do when checking for head lice**

Start behind the ears and check the entire head, hair by hair. **Check all hair from roots to tips.**

An easy way to find live lice is to use conditioner and a lice comb. White conditioner makes it easier to see lice.

- Apply conditioner to dry hair, soaking the hair from the scalp to ends of the hair.
- Remove tangles from the hair using a regular comb.
- Immediately comb with a lice comb. Pick a place to start. Be sure you comb through all hair over the whole head.
- Place the lice comb against the scalp and pull it to the end of the hair.
- After each pull through the hair, check the teeth of the comb for lice. Wipe the conditioner off the comb onto a paper tissue and look for lice again. Place used tissues in a plastic bag.
- Repeat the combing for every part of the head at least 5 times.

**If you find head lice**

- If you find **live** lice, you have a confirmed case that should be treated.
- If you find **only nits** and they are close to the scalp, you have a probable case of head lice. If your child has not been treated within the last month, you should treat for head lice now.
- Check everyone else in the household for lice, even if they do not feel itchy.
- Treat everyone in the household who has lice on the same day.

*“Conditioner stuns lice for 20 minutes. So once the hair is properly covered with a layer of conditioner, do not delay in combing those little suckers out!”* Nick Spaner, Tropical Health Solutions.
How to Treat Head Lice

What you need

• head lice treatment
  Public Health Services recommends using treatments with the following ingredients:
  – permethrin, found in products such as Nix or Kwellada-P
  OR
  – pyrethrins with piperonyl butoxide, found in products such as R&C, Pronto, Equate, or Licetrol

Other products may be available, but some do not have the ingredients that Public Health recommends to kill head lice. Please check for the above ingredients.

• lice comb, a special fine-tooth comb available at any drug store

• regular comb

• clean towel

What to do—10 steps

1 Comb hair with a regular comb to remove tangles.

2 Apply the treatment as follows:
   • Shake the bottle.
   • Apply the treatment to dry hair, even if the product directions says, “towel dried hair.” This will make sure the product is not watered down.
   • Put the lice treatment all over the scalp and rub in well.
   • Be sure that the treatment covers all of the hair, from the scalp to the ends.
   • Leave the treatment on the hair for as long as the package recommends.

3 Rinse out the treatment over the sink. Don’t rinse in a bathtub where the product could get onto other parts of the body. Dry the hair with a clean towel.

4 Comb the hair with a regular comb to remove tangles.

5 Comb for lice with a lice comb.

6 Continue daily lice combing every day between the first and second treatment. It is described in the next section. Do not skip this step!

7 Use the lice treatment a second time, 9 to 10 days after the first treatment. Use the same product, and follow the same steps you used for the first treatment. The first treatment kills the live lice and the second treatment kills any lice that have hatched since the first treatment was done. No product currently available will kill all of the nits.

8 Continue checking household members at least once a week for 3 weeks after the second treatment is done to make sure everyone is free of live lice. See the How to Check for Head Lice section of this book (page 49).

There are no short cuts to getting rid of Head Lice!
If you find live lice after the second treatment has been done, then repeat steps 1 to 8 using a different product (with a different ingredient) to kill the lice. For example, if you used a product with permethrin, then choose a different product that has pyrethrins with piperonyl butoxide. Make sure to do 2 treatments with the new product.

If you continue to find live head lice after following these steps, contact Public Health Services.

9

Keys to controlling head lice

- Two treatments, 9 to 10 days apart, for every household member who has live lice
- Daily lice combing between treatments
- Careful checking of everyone who has been in close contact with someone who has head lice
- Cleaning personal and household items that the people with lice may have used

10

Daily Lice Combing

Comb for lice every day between the first and second treatments. The first treatment will not kill all of the nits. Daily combing is needed to remove any lice that will hatch. If the new lice aren’t removed, they’ll lay more nits in 9 to 15 days and start the cycle over again. This step is key to your success in getting rid of head lice!

1 Wet your child’s hair. It should be damp, not dripping wet.

2 Comb hair with a regular comb to remove tangles.

3 Part the hair into thin, narrow sections. Comb with a lice comb (fine tooth comb) one section at a time.

4 Place the lice comb against the scalp and pull it to the end of the hair.

5 Check the teeth of the lice comb after each pull through the hair. Rinse off any lice or nits under running water or wipe them away with a tissue. Drop each tissue into a bag.

6 Repeat the combing for every section of hair at least 5 times.

7 When you finish lice combing, wash the comb under the tap. Use a nailbrush or old toothbrush to get between the teeth of the comb. If you’ve been using tissues to wipe the comb, tie the bag closed and throw it away. Soak the comb in very hot water for 10 minutes or store in the freezer for 24 hours before using again.

Daily lice combing is very important.
Household Clean Up

- **Wash combs, brushes, and hair accessories**—such as scrunchies, barrettes, and headbands—with hot, soapy water **until all lice or nits are removed**. Then soak them in very hot water for 10 minutes. Or you can put them in the freezer for 24 hours.

- **Use very hot, soapy water to wash clothing, sheets, towels, pillowcases, and so forth**, used by any household members with head lice in the last 3 days.

- Treat items that you can’t wash, such as blankets, coats, and stuffed toys, in one of the following ways:
  - Put it in a closed plastic bag for 10 days.
  - Put it in a hot dryer for 20 minutes.
  - Put it in the freezer for 24 hours.
  - Iron it.

- **Vacuum mattresses, carpets, and furniture**. Head lice can live **off the human head for up to 3 days**.

- **Do not use lice spray** around your home. There is no proof that spraying will help control lice, and it may harm family members or pets.

Other Treatments

You may have heard of using household products such as vaseline, mayonnaise, hair gel, or olive oil to treat head lice. Please remember that such methods have not been proven to work. Applying these products is thought to plug the holes through which the lice breathe. But head lice can live without air for up to 6 hours.

If you use one of these products, apply a thick coating to the hair and leave it on for at least 8 hours at a time. You may wish to apply before bedtime, cover hair with a shower cap overnight, and wash hair with regular shampoo in the morning. This may suffocate the live lice, but the nits will not be affected and will continue to hatch. You will need to repeat these treatments several times over 2 to 3 weeks. Remember to also use **daily lice combing**.

Some people have used natural products such as tea tree oil, other essential oils, and aromatherapy products to treat head lice. Public Health Services does not recommend the use of such products, because their safety and effectiveness is not yet known.

Other products such as gasoline or kerosene are flammable (easily set on fire) and toxic (poison). They are not recommended by Public Health Services because they are dangerous.
For More Information

Phone: 811

Websites:

- Speare, Rick. Tropical Health Solutions. tropicalhealthsolutions.com/headlice
- Canadian Paediatric Society: caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/head_lice
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: cdc.gov/parasites/lice/index.html
- 811 head lice. 811.novascotia.ca
  Click on “Search Health Topics”, type “lice” in the Search bar, then click “Search”.