

# Back to School Health and Safety Tips

**Dover** – Back to school is a busy time and there are many things for time-crunched parents to remember. The Division of Public Health (DPH) wants to help with these tips for a healthy and safe school year:

- **Wellness check:** DPH recommends that children and adolescents have an annual wellness check-up that includes a physical examination. At these visits, the child's health care provider will screen the child's overall health, including vision, hearing, and oral health. Health care providers also take this opportunity to assess promote healthy behaviors and strategies to prevent diseases. Annual wellness checks beginning at age 2 are strongly encouraged.
- **Immunizations:** To prevent communicable diseases such as chickenpox, measles, and mumps, DPH's Immunization Program recommends that Delawareans be up-to-date with their immunizations. New for the 2015-2016 school year, meningococcal and Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Tdap) vaccines are strongly recommended for 9th-grade entry. Starting in the 2016-2017 school year they will be required. For a list of required immunizations by age, visit the [Delaware Immunization Program's website](#) or call 800-282-8672.
- **School medical forms:** Medical and safety forms should be completed as soon as possible and returned to the school. In particular, school nurses need to know medical and learning conditions, prescribed medications, and allergies.
- **Sports participation forms:** Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association forms must be completed by parents or guardians and signed by the student's physician.
- **Backpacks:** Backpacks should be light – most doctors and

physical therapists recommend that kids carry no more than 10 percent-15 percent of their body weight in their backpacks when loaded. Children should wear backpacks over both shoulders not just one to reduce the risk of muscle and neck strains or injuries.

- Reflective tape: Buy back-to-school outer clothes and supplies with reflective tape to assist bus drivers and other motorists to see children at bus stops, and walking or bicycling to and from school.

- Bus Safety: Parents should review bus information with their children. Write down the bus driver's name, bus number, driver phone number, and the pick-up and drop-off times and locations. Keep that information handy at home and also include it in the child's backpack for their easy reference.

- Pedestrian Safety: All children should be coached about crossing at crosswalks and be taught to obey traffic signals, highway signs, and laws. Safe routes to and from school should be mapped out, and children should be reminded never to accept rides, candy, or other invitations from strangers. When possible, younger children should be accompanied by a trustworthy adult.

- Healthy lunches: Parents should complete and return school forms to establish lunch accounts quickly, sending some lunch money the first days of school as a back-up measure. To prevent foodborne illness, pack lunches in insulated coolers with ice or ice packs to keep food at 40 F or below. Pack nutritious, lunches with protein, whole grains and fruits, and vegetables. Water or non-fat milk are great drink choices.

For more information about preparing children for returning to school, visit the [KidsHealth from Nemours parenting website](#).

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind, or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation

to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.