myHealth CONNECTIONS
PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

ignites

Wellness Wednesdays

AUGUST, 2025 WEEK 1

BACK-TO-SCHOOL IMMUNE BOOST: Start the School Year Strong

Between multiple classrooms, group activities, and busy schedules, school can take a toll on your child's immune system. With a few simple habits, parents and caregivers alike, can help protect kids health and make their transition back to class a healthier one for everyone.

Developing a strong immune system is the result of a balanced routine and healthy lifestyle. Good nutrition, sleep, hydration, physical activity, and preventive care are vitally important for healthy children.

Immunity Building Blocks

Healthy kids are able to focus on lessons, engage in activities, and socialize with their peers. That's why we're breaking down what it takes to nurture a thriving immune system this month.

Feed their defenses

Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins are loaded with the vitamins and minerals kids need to stay healthy. These nutrients help their immune systems build white blood cells, fight germs, and recover from illness faster.

Some of the best foods to include:

- Citrus fruits (like oranges or tangerines) for vitamin C
- Carrots, spinach, and sweet potatoes for vitamin A
- Yogurt with live cultures for probiotics
- Beans and seeds for zinc

Try to include a rainbow of colors in meals and snacks and aim for regular mealtimes to help regulate energy and digestion.

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CLICK OR TAP! **We've highlighted some resources you may want to look into further. Simply click or tap the icon or its hyperlink to access these select materials!**

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Keep water flowing

Water is critical for a healthy body and mind. Most of the human body is water, consisting of approximately 60 percent. Drinking enough water keeps the body's systems, including the immune system, working properly. Hydration helps flush out toxins and prevents fatigue.

Encourage healthy hydration by:

- Using a refillable water bottle in your kids' favorite color or add fun stickers
- Infusing water with fresh fruits for flavor. Consider adding strawberries, blueberries and oranges for a refreshing and fun beverage
- Offering water-rich foods like cucumbers, watermelon, and grapes

Prioritize sleep

Sleep enhances the body's ability to repair and fight off illnesses. Most school-age children require between nine and 12 hours of sleep nightly.

To help children wind down:

- Set a regular bedtime and wake-up time, even on weekends
- Create a calming nighttime routine (reading, stretching, or a warm bath)
- Eliminate screen time at least 30 minutes before bed to help the brain relax

Healthy Routines and Screen Time Smarts

The shift from summer to school can be tough on families. Start small to ease the transition:

- Gradually adjust sleep and wake times a week before school starts
- Practice the morning routine before school officially starts (getting dressed, packing a lunch, etc.)
- Create a quiet spot for homework and reading

Screen time can also affect sleep, behavior, and focus. Research shows that excessive screen time can negatively impact a child's cognitive, linguistic, and social-emotional growth.

Set limits that work for your family:

- Remove devices with screens from your kids' bedrooms
- Use parental controls and encourage breaks every 30-60 minutes
- Make time for outdoor play, hobbies, and creative time without screens

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than 1-2 hours of recreational screen time per day for school-age children, depending on age and individual needs.

Support at Every Step

Your health plan includes tools and resources to support your child's wellness throughout the school year. Schedule virtual or in-person doctor visits using BCBSIL Resources and use your Guardian Dental benefits to keep smiles healthy. You can also get help managing eye health through Davis Vision. Check your **benefits portal** to learn more. CLICK OR TAP!

Back-to-school season can feel like a fresh start for both kids and caregivers alike. By focusing on immune-boosting habits and routine care, children can feel confident and energized for the new school year.

Stay consistent, stay connected, and make wellness a fundamental part of the school-day routine.

SOURCES: *Nemours KidsHealth*, *Lurie Children's Hospital*, *Sleep Foundation*, *Cureus*, *American Academy of Pediatrics*

Routine Appointments that Matter

The start of the school year is a great time to schedule annual checkups to help keep children healthy.

ANNUAL PHYSICAL:

An annual physical is an important part of a child's healthcare routine. It helps track growth, development, and identify any health concerns early. Providers can also offer guidance on school nutrition, sports readiness, and sleep needs.

Does your child have a Primary Care Physician (PCP)? Need help finding one? Call the Health Advocate number on your BCBSIL member ID card or log in to **Blue Access for Members℠ (BAM℠)** at **bcbsil.com** and use the **Find Care** tool to locate in-network care.

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VACCINATIONS:

Routine immunizations protect your child and their classmates against preventable illnesses like measles, flu, and whooping cough. Ask your provider about what's due or recommended based on your child's age and school requirements.

DENTAL CHECKUPS:

Oral health affects more than just teeth. Regular Oral health impacts more than just teeth. Regular cleanings and screenings help prevent infections that can impact overall well-being. Use your Guardian Dental benefits to schedule a back-to-school visit.

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VISION EXAMS:

Good vision supports learning and confidence. Kids may not always notice if they're having trouble seeing, so an annual exam with Davis Vision can catch issues early and ensure your child is set up for success and plenty of reading this school year.

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Share this article with your colleagues so they too can get the family ready for school!