



# Your Back-to-School Prep List

by Melissa Athmer

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**O’FALLON** –Are your kids prepared for the new school year? Are you? While children need to prepare emotionally and mentally for getting into the back-to-school routine, parents need to get ready on many fronts too. HSHS St. Elizabeth’s Hospital and HSHS Medical Group offer this handy checklist of preparations to tackle before school starts.

## **HEALTH PREP**

To help make sure your child stays healthy during the school year:

- **Update vaccinations.** Dr. Saba Bajwa, HSHS Medical Group pediatrician, shared, “Immunizations are crucial for protecting children from serious diseases by boosting the body's natural immunity.”

The best way to protect your child is to follow the recommended vaccine schedule from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at [cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules). It lists immunizations that children of various ages need, including:

- Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR).
- Chickenpox (varicella).
- Tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (Tdap).
- Polio.
- Meningitis.
- Pneumococcal (pneumonia).
- Hepatitis A and B.
- Human papillomavirus (HPV).
- Rotavirus.

If you have questions or concerns about vaccines, you can always talk to your child's primary care provider. They can help you determine which shots your child needs and when.

Also check with the school to find out what vaccinations they require.

- **Arrange for a sports physical if your child plays sports.** An exam can give you peace of mind that your child can handle the physical demands of school sports and extracurricular activities. In fact, most sports require a physical for a medical eligibility form.

HSHS Medical Group clinics in the O’Fallon area are offering sports physicals for a flat fee of \$20 (school physicals are billed to insurance). Contact your local HSHS Medical Group office to learn more. For locations and options, visit [hshs.org/medical-group/school-and-sports-physicals](https://hshs.org/medical-group/school-and-sports-physicals).

## **AT-HOME PREP**

Before the first day of school, spend time with your child on some important issues:

- **Transition to school sleep/wake schedule.** A good night's sleep will help your child concentrate, retain information and prevent mood swings. To aid the transition from vacation time to school time, set bedtime and waking time incrementally earlier in the week or two leading up to the start of school, eventually

settling on the times that work best for their schooling. Limit time with electronics such as video games, television, cell phones or tablets before bed as these items stimulate the brain and are not conducive to good sleep.

- **Create a study area.** Prepare a well-lit place where your child can do their homework. Make sure it's a quiet space without electronic distractions.
- **Choose a suitable backpack.** For safety's sake, a filled backpack should weigh no more than 10% to 20% of your child's body weight. Adjust the backpack so the bottom meets your child's waist. If your child's load is heavy, consider a rolling backpack. And don't forget to tuck an in-case-of-emergency contact card in the backpack.
- **Talk to your kids about bullying.** Bullying is linked to a range of educational and emotional problems. Make sure your child knows:
  - To seek a trusted adult for help if they are bullied or they see someone else being bullied.
  - How to respond nonviolently to bullying.
  - That you're monitoring their texts and social media accounts for bullying behavior.
  - That it's never OK to bully someone, even if encouraged by others.

## **TO-AND-FROM-SCHOOL PREP**

Whether your child rides the bus, bicycles or walks to school, take steps to ensure their safety:

- **Review your child's route to school in advance.** Drive the route so your child knows what to expect. If they will be riding their bike or walking, ride or walk the route with them.
- **Talk to your child about bus stop, bicycling and walking safety.** Make sure they know about crosswalk, biking and walking protocols.
- **Set up carpooling shifts.** If you prefer to drive your child, find other parents who are safety minded.

## **BEFORE-AND-AFTER-SCHOOL CARE PREP**

- **Arrange for caretaking.** If you need help before or after school, look into responsible school programs, off-site institutions, or caretakers at your home or theirs.

By following these tips, you can help ensure your child has a healthy, safe and successful school year.

*Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Sleep Foundation*