

KIDS AND SLEEP

Adequate sleep is important for children's health, states the American Academy of Pediatrics. Quality sleep is just as important as well visits and protective immunizations. Babies and young children may sleep between 10 and 18 hours per day, but by the time a child reaches school-age, he or she may be well-rested after getting between 9 and 11 hours. Sleep is vital for the body to recover and rebuild and for the brain to process new information. The Center for Pediatric Sleep Disorders at Boston Children's Hospital says that children who are not getting enough sleep may experience difficulty learning new tasks. Parents who want to foster good sleeping habits in their children can try the following strategies.

- Set a smart bedtime and nap schedule.
- Do not allow the use of electronics approximately one hour prior to bedtime.
- Create a regular bedtime routine that includes winding down and cues that rest is coming.
- Stick to the same schedule every day of the week — including weekends.
- Make sure kids get daily exercise, which can make it easier for them to grow tired around bedtime.
- Create a cool, comfortable and dark sleeping environment.

STUDENT PHYSICAL EXAMINATION TIPS

School time requires having all of the necessary supplies, clothing and gear ready for the year. In addition, preparing for a new school year often involves providing updated physical health information to the school administration.

The requirements for health screenings and reporting may vary between school districts. Some physical examinations need to be conducted annually, while others may only need updating at certain intervals, such as when kids transition from elementary school to middle school or middle school to high school.

Updated physical forms also may be required at the start of a sports season.

Health screenings are intended to detect problems that may interfere with learning. Physical exams may indicate issues that can hamper progress



Prepare for school by getting students' medical information in order during summer vacations.

or shed light on undiagnosed problems that may require further assessment and necessitate customized learning plans to help students succeed. Physical exams are also a way to ensure students' immunizations are up to date.

According to the

Pennsylvania Department of Health, physical exams typically are completed by students' primary care providers. Some school districts offer free or low-cost health assessments through school providers as well.

Students who will be traveling for school may

be required to meet the health requirements of their destination country. For example, medical students admitted to a Canadian university may be required to get a medical exam, according to the Government of Canada.

Visiting the doctor, nurse practitioner or a school-provided medical professional may not make school-aged children too happy. To make the process go smoothly, consider these suggestions.

- Work with physicians who have access to electronic health records. EHRs are secure technology that provides easy access to vaccination records, health history, appointment reminders, and even prescription information. Some providers even make it possible for patients to directly access their health information through a secure login, helping save time.

- Make appointments during school hours. After-school appointments are peak times for pediatric offices and medical clinics. Sign students out of school early to visit the doctor for medical exams. The staff likely will be less harried, and you can spend more time asking questions and completing forms. Schools may not count the absence if a doctor's note is provided.

- Don't forget the forms. Bring the right paperwork so that the staff can fill out what is necessary for the school, camp or sports league.

- Know your insurance guidelines. Physical exams may be part of routine well visits. Insurance companies institute their own policies regarding how frequently physicals can be conducted (usually annually). Be sure to schedule the appointment accordingly.

Physical examinations are on many parents' back-to-school to-do lists. Certain strategies can make physicals easier for adults and children alike.

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