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Germs spread easily in a classroom. Handwashing is the best way to stop the spread of germs that cause colds, influenza (flu), diarrhea and other sicknesses. It is important that children learn how and when to wash their hands to lower their risk of getting sick.

**How to Wash Hands:**

- **Wet** hands under warm running water
- **Scrub** with plain soap for a count of 20, all over hands and between fingers
- **Rinse** under running water for a count of 10
- **Dry** hands with a clean paper towel
- **Turn** off taps with a paper towel

**When to Wash Hands:**

- Before and after eating or handling food
- After using the toilet, handling pets, coughing, sneezing, or wiping noses

**How long is 20 seconds?**

- Slowly singing “Happy Birthday” twice takes about 20 seconds

For more information contact:

- Your local Public Health Unit
- HealthLinkBC or dial 8-1-1 (a free call)
- Do Bugs Need Drugs?
BC HEALTHY KIDS DENTAL PROGRAM

Basic dental coverage is available for children through the Healthy Kids Program. Dependant children under 19 years of age may be covered for dental care if the family is approved to receive premium assistance for BC Medical Services Plan (MSP).

Children are eligible for up to $1400 of basic dental services every two years. This includes services such as exams, x-rays, fillings, cleanings and extractions. Some services are limited. For example, the program does not cover orthodontic treatment. Healthy Kids may not cover all of the costs and there may be additional charges for each visit. Before treatment begins, confirm that your dentist is accepting children covered by the BC Healthy Kids Program, and what part of the services will be covered.

To use the services, take your child’s BC Care Card to the dental office and they will confirm coverage before each appointment.

To find out if your child is covered call:

- 1-866-866-0800 (have your child’s Care Card Number handy)

Or access the Healthy Kids website.

For more information contact:

- VIHA Child, Youth and Family Community Health Dental:
  
  Saanich Health Unit 250-519-5100
  Esquimalt Health Unit 250-519-5311
  Peninsula Health Unit 250-544-2400
  West Shore Health Unit 250-519-3490
  Duncan Health Unit 250-709-3050
  Nanaimo Public Health 250-739-5845
  Port Alberni Public Health Services 250-731-1315
  Comox Valley Health Unit 250-331-8520
  Campbell River Health Unit 250-850-2110
  Port Hardy Health Unit 250-902-6071
**KINDERGARTEN HEARING SCREENING**

Children may have unknown hearing loss when they start school. Slight hearing loss or hearing loss in just one ear is hard to notice. Yet, these losses can cause school problems that are preventable. Each year, kindergarten children have their hearing checked at school by Community Health Vision and Hearing Screeners. Each year, the "Kindergarten Hearing Screening Program" helps find children with hearing loss. If a child does not pass the hearing screening, a letter is sent home to parents. If you receive a letter, it is important to make an appointment to have your child’s hearing tested at the Hearing Clinic. Many hearing problems can be treated if identified early.

For more information contact:

- Your local [Public Health Unit](#) Hearing Clinic

**Hearing Clinics:**

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**Kindergarten Immunization Program**

Child, Youth and Family Community Health offers immunization clinics throughout the year for Kindergarten aged children.

The following are the most common vaccines given to children at this age. Some children may be missing some vaccines and have not completed their childhood immunizations. Public Health Nurses or Family Physicians can ensure that your child is fully immunized against the following vaccine preventable diseases.

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<tr>
<th>Vaccine</th>
<th>Vaccine Schedule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis and Polio (given in one poke)</td>
<td>Most children in kindergarten are due for this vaccine.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Varicella (Chickenpox)          | Most children in kindergarten are due for a second dose of this vaccine.  
• Children who have had chickenpox disease or shingles when they were over one year of age do not need this vaccine.  
• Children who had chickenpox disease when they were younger than one year of age OR who have never had chickenpox disease should have already been given 1 dose of this vaccine and now need a second dose. If the second dose is necessary, it can be mixed with the measles mumps and rubella, so the child will be getting only one poke. |
| Hepatitis B                     | Most children in kindergarten should have already been given 3 doses of this vaccine.                                                         |
| Measles, Mumps and Rubella (given in one poke) | Most children in kindergarten should have already been given 1 dose of this vaccine. Most children in kindergarten are due for a second dose or this vaccine. In kindergarten it can be mixed with chickenpox vaccine so children will be getting only one poke. |
| Meningococcal C                 | Most children in kindergarten should have already been given 2 doses of this vaccine.                                                         |

All of these vaccines are provided free of charge by the health unit or your family doctor. To check your child’s immunization status or to make an appointment, phone your local Public Health Unit.

For more information contact:

- Your local Public Health Unit
- HealthLinkBC or dial 8-1-1 (a free call)
- HealthLink BC Files
- Your family doctor
- www.immunizebc.ca
Head Lice Awareness

Head lice are common in BC communities. Although they are a bother, head lice are not a health risk.

Head lice spread quickly by close, head-to-head contact. Lice cannot live on furniture or carpet, and they cannot jump or fly. There may be few or no symptoms, but itching may occur.

You can help by:

- Checking your child’s head with the wet combing method of detection once a week throughout the year.
- Review the pamphlet *Wet Combing – How to Get Rid of Head Lice*, available online, at your school and Public Health Unit.
- Encouraging your child to wear their hair tied back.
- Treating if you notice live lice on your child’s head.
- Reminding family and friends about the importance of routine head checks.

For more information:

- Read the HealthLink BC File on Head Lice [HealthLink BC File #06 Head Lice](#)
- Contact your local Public Health Unit
WHO SHOULD GET THE SEASONAL INFLUENZA (FLU) VACCINE

The influenza vaccine protects against viruses that cause seasonal influenza, often called the flu. The vaccine does not protect against other viruses or bacteria that cause colds or stomach illness such as “stomach flu.”

Influenza, often called seasonal flu, is an infection of the nose, throat and lungs caused by the influenza virus. A person with influenza is at risk of other infections, including viral or bacterial pneumonia (infections of the lungs). Influenza spreads easily from person to person through coughing, sneezing, or having close face-to-face contact. The virus can also be spread when a person touches an object contaminated with the influenza virus and then touches his or her mouth or nose.

For more information, or to find out who is eligible for the free annual vaccination, please contact:

- Your local Public Health Unit
- HealthLinkBC or dial 8-1-1 (a free call)
- HealthLink BC Files
- Your doctor
- www.immunizebc.ca

For a laugh check out: The Sneeze
PREVENTING COLDS AND INFLUENZA (FLU)

Cold and influenza season is here. As the weather gets cooler and we move indoors, so do germs. Children need reminders to decrease the risk of colds and flu in your house by:

- Washing hands often
- Coughing and sneezing into their elbow
- Not sharing facecloths or towels
- Keeping hands away from nose and mouth
- Not sharing food or drink with others

To help limit the spread of germs, please keep your child at home if they are feverish, coughing a lot, has a thick yellow or green discharge from the nose, or is otherwise obviously unwell.

Remember:

- Viruses cause colds and influenza
- The most effective treatment for a cold is rest and fluids
- The influenza vaccine will protect against specific types of influenza
- Antibiotics will not make a cold or other virus go away faster
- Call your doctor if your child has an earache, fever higher than 39° C (102° F), rash, is very sleepy, very cranky or fussy, has trouble breathing or a cough that will not go away.
- Handwashing is the most effective way to stop the spread of germs that cause colds, influenza, diarrhea, and other illnesses
- Wash hands, before and after eating or handling food, after using the toilet, handling pets, coughing, sneezing, or wiping noses

For more information contact:

- Your local Public Health Unit
- HealthLinkBC or dial 8-1-1 (a free call)
- Your doctor
BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE EARS

Ear infections or middle ear fluid occur in nearly two-thirds of all children by the age of three years! Ear infections are the most common reason children see the doctor. Ear infections can lead to fluid behind the eardrum, leading to a temporary hearing loss. When the fluid is gone hearing usually goes back to normal. This can take up to three months. Frequent ear infections can cause difficulties with pronunciation, language and learning.

If your child has an ear problem, be sure to let the teacher know. Ear problems can make it hard for your child to hear, listen and learn at school. If the hearing loss persists, contact a Public Health Unit Hearing clinic to arrange a hearing test for your child.

For more information contact:

- Your local Public Health Unit Hearing Clinic

Hearing Clinics:

Victoria 250-388-2250
West Shore 250-519-3490
Nanaimo 250-755-6200
Courtenay 250-331-8526
ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES (E-CIGARETTES)

What are e-cigarettes?

E-cigarettes are popular “high tech” devices on sale at many convenience stores and stand-alone e-cigarette retailers. They are sometimes marketed as a safe alternative to smoking and the advertising is aimed at hooking youth.

E-cigarettes can look like pipes, pens, USB memory sticks or regular cigarettes, and are made up of a battery, cartridge and a heating element. E-cigarette liquid often has nicotine even though it is not legal to sell nicotine-containing fluid in Canada. The fluid comes in many attractive flavours, such as chocolate mint, strawberry, grape and watermelon. This is another method of attracting youth to try the product.

E-cigarettes send off a vapour, and the mist is inhaled into your lungs, much like a traditional cigarette.

Are they safe?

People who use them (or “vape”) are very excited about this product, yet there is a lot that we do not know about them, and they are not proven to be safe. For example, e-cigarettes:

- Can send out unknown and possibly harmful substances, some of which may cause cancer, are poisonous and have caused fires.
- May have nicotine and be addictive.
- Are not proven to help people quit smoking and may lead you to actually take it up!
- Are not approved by Health Canada to help you quit.
- Are another way that Big Tobacco wants to hook you and make money.

Island Health Tobacco Prevention does not support using electronic cigarettes:

- By young people.
- As a way to quit smoking.
- In any place where regular cigarettes are not allowed to be smoked.

For more information, contact:

- Your Tobacco Prevention staff:
  
  Victoria:        250-519-3426       Courtenay and
  Nanaimo:         250-739-5800       Campbell River:     250-331-8589
Kindergarten Vision Screening

Children may have unknown vision problems that can lead to difficulty with reading and/or writing when they start school. During the school year, Public Health Screeners help find children with possible vision concerns by checking kindergarten children's vision. Letters are sent home to parents before the screening with information about screening, and after, with the results. If your child is referred, it is important that you take them for a complete eye exam with an eye doctor.

British Columbia’s Medical Services Plan provides some coverage for eye exams for children under the age of 18, and The Healthy Kids Program provides limited funds once in a twelve-month period for prescription eyewear for children 0 – 18 years living in low-income families.

For more information contact:

- Your local Public Health Unit
- HealthLinkBC or dial 8-1-1 (a free call)
- BC Healthy Kids Program
KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFE ON HALLOWEEN

Trick or Treating can be a risky time for children. Up to about 10 years of age, children do not have the skills to be safe in traffic.

Here are some tips to help keep your child safe:

- Make sure your child has a light and/or reflective clothing
- Have an adult go with your children, especially if they are under 10
- If your child is not with an adult, make sure she is in a group of at least 3 people
- If you are not with your child, make sure you know where he is and who he is with
- Teach your child road safety rules and to look, listen and think about traffic
- Teach your child about personal safety and to never go with anyone they don’t know
- Teach your child not to eat treats until a parent has checked them
- Consider alternatives to trick-or-treating, such as a home party or local community centres or malls

For more information contact:

- Your local Public Health Unit
- Halloween Safety (Government of Canada)
- Halloween Safety: Tips for Families (Canadian Paediatric Society)
- Triple P Positive Parenting Program
MARIJUANA! TALK ABOUT IT

Adolescence is “the age of experimentation”. Sometimes the experimentation includes tobacco, alcohol and other drug use. Normal adolescent behaviour includes exploring the world and taking risks. The adolescent brain hasn’t fully developed, making it difficult to foresee the consequences of their actions. Parents can make a difference in their teen’s decision to experiment with drugs. The most important thing parents can do is talk with their children about the issues facing youth today.

In our region, more teens are using marijuana than are smoking cigarettes. Most start experimenting with marijuana around 13 years of age. Pot, grass, weed, joint, bud, mary jane, hashish, hash and hash oil - marijuana has many names. Marijuana is the dried leaves and buds of Cannabis Sativa (a form of hemp). Marijuana is grayish-green to greenish brown in colour and looks similar to dried and crushed oregano. Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the active ingredient in marijuana that gives users the desired “high”. Hashish is a tar-like substance made from the female plant and is more potent than marijuana. Hash oil is the purest form of the drug and has the highest content of THC.

Marijuana increases the user’s perception of taste, colour, sound and sensations. Some of the most common physical effects of marijuana include red eyes, increased appetite, drowsiness, impaired coordination, dry mouth and throat, impaired concentration and occasionally hallucinations.

For more information contact:

- Your local Public Health Unit
- HealthLinkBC or dial 8-1-1 (a free call)
- Centre for Addictions Research of BC
- McCreary Centre Society
- Kelty Mental Health
TOBACCO! TALK ABOUT IT

Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death in Canada. According to the 2008 Adolescent Health Survey, 26% of students have tried smoking, some starting as young as 9 years old. Someone who uses tobacco can become addicted to smoking after only 2 cigarettes or 1 wad of chewing tobacco. As a parent, you can help your child stay tobacco-free by talking openly about the dangers of tobacco and addiction, even if you use tobacco. Parents are a child’s greatest role models and the research has shown that you can reduce your child’s likelihood of using tobacco just by talking with them.

How can you protect your children from second-hand smoke?

According to the 2008 Adolescent Health Survey, 28% of youth were exposed to tobacco smoke inside their home or vehicle. Non-smokers exposed to tobacco smoke are more likely to suffer from asthma, colds, pneumonia, ear infections (children) and other respiratory problems. You can protect the non-smokers in your house by:

- Talking with your children about the dangers of second-hand smoke.
- Making your home and car smoke-free and encouraging your family and friends to do the same.
- Asking smokers to smoke outside and setting up a comfortable outdoor smoking section away from open doors and windows.
- Asking smokers to wash hands and remove jackets when returning inside after smoking.
- Visiting only smoke-free places.

For more information contact:

- Your local Public Health Unit
- HealthLinkBC or dial 8-1-1 (a free call)
- Quit Now or call 1-877-455-2233
- Smoke Free Spaces
- Tobacco Control Program
- McCreary Centre Society
**WHY USE FLUORIDE TOOTHPASTE?**

Fluoride is absorbed into the tooth enamel making the tooth more resistant to decay. New teeth especially can benefit from fluoride, and school-aged children are getting their new adult teeth.

Daily use of fluoride toothpaste is a cheap and easy way to protect children’s teeth from decay. A small amount of toothpaste about the size of a pea, used twice each day, is all you need.

Public water supplies on Vancouver Island do not have fluoride added. Therefore, it is very important to use fluoride toothpaste.

Spit out after brushing – don’t rinse! This will allow small amounts of fluoride to stay in the mouth. The fluoride can help reverse areas of early tooth decay and slow down the decay process.

Toothpastes with special adult ingredients such as “anti-tartar”, “whitening”, and “anti-bacterial” agents are not recommended for children under age 12.

For more information contact:

- VIHA Child, Youth and Family Community Health Dental:

  - Saanich Health Unit 250-519-5100
  - Esquimalt Health Unit 250-519-5311
  - Peninsula Health Unit 250-544-2400
  - West Shore Health Unit 250-519-3490
  - Duncan Health Unit 250-709-3050
  - Nanaimo Public Health 250-739-5845
  - Port Alberni Public Health Services 250-731-1315
  - Comox Valley Health Unit 250-331-8520
  - Campbell River Health Unit 250-850-2110
  - Port Hardy Health Unit 250-902-6071
PROTECTING YOUR CHILD’S HEARING

Some hearing facts…

- **Children have more trouble hearing in noisy environments than adults!** This is because their nervous systems are not mature. Children learn best in quiet, both at home and school.
- **Noise or loud music can hurt your child’s ears!** Firecrackers are really dangerous – they can cause sudden permanent damage. Power tools, lawnmowers and even loud music can damage the delicate inner ear. When your child is around loud noises, protect them with earplugs or earmuffs or better still, avoid the noise.
- **Do you have concerns about your child’s hearing?** Contact a Public Health Unit Hearing Clinic to arrange a hearing test for your child.

For more information contact:

- Your local Public Health Unit Hearing Clinic

**Hearing Clinics:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>250-388-2250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Shore</td>
<td>250-519-3490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanaimo</td>
<td>250-755-6200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtenay</td>
<td>250-331-8526</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Beware of Bats!

About 10% of bats in British Columbia are infected with Rabies. Rabies is a virus that is spread to humans from sick bats through bites, scratches, saliva or touching. Rabies is a serious disease and will cause death if not treated quickly.

To prevent rabies:

- Vaccinate your pet dogs or cats.
- Do not touch bats… ever.
- If you are bitten or scratched by a bat, wash the wound well with soap and water.
- If you find a bat in your house, leave the room right away. Call the Communicable Disease Program or HealthLinkBC at 8-1-1 (a free call).
- If you have any contact with a bat, including situations when a bat is in the room and you cannot exclude any possible bite, scratch or mucous membrane exposure (e.g. in a room with a bat, sleeping in a room/tent with a bat), immediately call the Island Health Communicable Disease Program, or go to the nearest hospital for a Rabies vaccination.

For more information contact:

- Island Health Communicable Disease Program:
  South Island: 1-866-665-6626
  Central Island: 1-866-770-7798
  North Island: 1-877-887-8835
- HealthLinkBC at 8-1-1 (a free call)
SUN SMART

Too much sun (especially sunburns) can cause:

- Eye damage
- Skin cancer later in life
- Damage to immune system
- Skin damage that is cumulative; this means that the damage builds up over time

Those at highest risk of skin cancer are those with:

- Fair skin and blonde or red hair
- Skin that burns and freckles easily
- Lots of moles or large moles
- History of severe sunburns

Ultraviolet (UV) Index:

- UV Index is a measurement that determines how strong the sun is
- You and your child can sunburn in only 15 minutes depending on the UV Index
- UV Index is usually highest from late spring to early fall between 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., so avoid unprotected sun exposure between these times
- Use sun protection (clothing, sunscreen, sunglasses, wide brimmed hat) if UV Index is greater than 3
- Even people with dark skin are at risk for skin damage and cancers

Ways to protect yourself and your child:

- SEEK out the shade
- SLIP on clothing that covers arms and legs
- SLAP on a wide brimmed hat and sunglasses
- SLOP on sunscreen
- SLURP lots of water

Sunscreen Tips:

- Avoid the mouth and eye area when applying sunscreen
- Use broad-spectrum sunscreen (with UVA and UVB coverage) with SPF 30 or higher
- Apply sunscreen at least 20 minutes before going outside

For more information contact:

- Your local Public Health Unit
- HealthLinkBC or dial 8-1-1 (a free call)
- Sun Safety - Health Canada
- Sun Safety - Canadian Dermatology Association
LIFE-THREATENING FOOD ALLERGIES AND SPECIAL DAYS

Special days like birthdays, Easter and end-of-year parties are often times of celebration with friends, family and food. However, for students at our school who have life-threatening allergies, these can be very risky times. You can help to keep allergic students safe by:

- Celebrating with stickers, games or prizes instead of food.
- Not sending or bringing peanut, nut, or other allergen-containing products to school.
- Checking in with the teacher/school ahead of time to find out if any special celebrations are planned.
- Remind students to tell an adult right away when they might be having a reaction.
- Make sure the teacher and school staff know what to do if a student has a reaction.

Refer to your school’s policies and regulations around life-threatening food allergies for more information.

For more information contact:

- Your local Public Health Unit
- Food Allergy Canada
- HealthLinkBC and Dietitian Services or dial 8-1-1 and ask to speak to a Registered Dietitian (a free call)
- HealthLink BC File #100a Severe Allergic Reactions to Food Children and Teens
- Your local Doctor or Pharmacist
**KEEPING ACTIVE CHILDREN HYDRATED**

When children are playing they may need to be encouraged to drink to prevent dehydration (not enough water in the body).

**Water is the best choice to keep children hydrated.**

✓ Recommended: Water, milk, fortified soy, almond or rice beverage

☺ Not Recommended: Sports drinks*, energy drinks  
(*Sports drinks are high in sugar and are only for those exercising and sweating for longer than an hour.)

**Keep active children hydrated:**

- Offer water often, especially during activity.
- Provide water or milk and watery snacks like watermelon, cucumber or smoothies after activity.
- Avoid juice and give fresh fruit instead.

**Is your child’s water bottle safe?**

Use stainless steel bottles or plastic bottles that are designed for reuse. Disposable plastic bottles that are filled with water, pop, sports drinks, etc., should not be reused.

**Wash water bottles every day!**

Wash water bottles well by hand each day. Dishwashers do not clean all parts of the inside of the bottle. Recycle any bottles that show signs of wear such as scratches, dents, or a cloudy, cracked appearance.

For more information:

- Your local Public Health Unit
- HealthLinkBC and Dietitian Services or dial 8-1-1 and ask to speak to a Registered Dietitian (a free call)
- What’s in the Bottle? From Sports Drinks to Vitaminized Water (PDF)
- Sip Smart! BC
Breakfast boosts brainpower. Children who eat breakfast eat better and do better on math and reading tests. They eat more servings of grains, vegetables and fruit and milk so they get more of the nutrients they need every day.

The brain uses carbohydrate as its main fuel. The body’s carbohydrate stores are low after a night’s sleep. Eating grains, vegetables and fruit at breakfast gives fuel for the brain so a child can do well at school.

A balanced morning meal includes food from at least 3 of the 4 Food Groups in Canada’s Food Guide.

Examples of healthy breakfasts:
- Whole grain cereal with milk or milk alternative and fruit
- Fruit yogurt smoothie and a small muffin
- Scrambled eggs, toast and milk or milk alternative
- Banana dog: a hot dog bun spread with peanut butter and a banana inside

Check out the pamphlet “Snack Attack!/Breakfast… the right way to start your day!” available at your local Public Health Unit.

For more information:
- Your local Public Health Unit
- HealthLinkBC and Dietitian Services or dial 8-1-1 and ask to speak to a Registered Dietitian (a free call)
- Dietitians of Canada
- Healthy Families BC
- Breakfast for Learning (to learn more about starting a breakfast program at your school)
HEALTHY SNACKS

Snacks are part of healthy eating for children. Offer 2-3 healthy snacks a day as well as 3 meals spaced through the day to provide the nutrients and energy children need to learn and grow. Allowing a child to snack all day long increases the risk for tooth decay and children may not be hungry at meal times.

Tips for healthy snacking:

- Healthy snacks include foods from at least 2 of the 4 food groups from Canada’s Food Guide.
- Check food labels before you buy packaged snack foods. Look for snack foods that are low in sugar and high in nutrients such as fibre and calcium.
- Sticky foods like crackers, raisins and granola bars cling to the teeth and increase the risk of tooth decay. Encourage children to rinse well with water after these snacks.

Keep these easy, healthy snacks on hand:

- Cut-up vegetables or fruit with salad dressing or yogurt dip
- Crackers and cheese
- Hummus and pita
- Yogurt and whole grain bread sticks
- Small muffin and fruit
- Whole grain cereal and milk
- Half a sandwich

Need more healthy snack ideas? Check out Snack Attack!/Breakfast the Right Way to Start Your Day, available at your school and Public Health Unit.

For more information:

- Your local Public Health Unit
- HealthLinkBC and Dietitian Services or dial 8-1-1 and ask to speak to a Registered Dietitian (a free call)
- Dietitians of Canada
- Healthy Families BC
EASY IDEAS
WITH VEGGIES AND FRUIT

Most children don’t get enough vegetables and fruit each day. School-age children and youth need 5 to 8 servings of fruit and vegetables each day.

Support your child to eat more vegetables and fruit:

- Eat vegetables and fruit together with your children. Children learn by watching you.
- Involve children in buying and preparing vegetables and fruit. Try cut up veggies and fruit such as cucumber slices, cherry tomatoes, cauliflower, oranges, apple, pear or kiwi with salad dressing or yogurt for dipping.
- Cut and serve them in many ways. Try vegetables and fruit cold, hot or right from the freezer. Frozen grapes or blueberries make a terrific snack.
- Offer vegetables and fruit at snack and meal times. It can take up to 20 times of offering the same food before a child will accept it.

A child’s intake varies from day to day. Trust that a healthy child will meet their nutrient needs over time.

Need fresh ideas? Check out halfyourplate.ca

For more information:

- Your local Public Health Unit
- HealthLinkBC and Dietitian Services or dial 8-1-1 and ask to speak to a Registered Dietitian (a free call)
- Dietitians of Canada
- Healthy Families BC
PLAY IT SAFE WITH YOUR SMILE

Every year, sporting accidents cause broken teeth and injury to children’s mouths. Mouth protectors help prevent injury to teeth and lips during sports such as ice and field hockey, baseball, basketball, soccer, lacrosse and rugby.

Adults can be good role models by wearing helmets and mouth guards to prevent sports injuries and encouraging children to do the same.

Mouth guard kits are available at sporting goods stores for under $20.00. Ask the store about the best guard for the particular sport. These mouth guards are quick and easy to fit, but are not suitable for use over braces or other oral appliances. For a custom fit mouth guard, contact your dental office.

Accidents can happen. If a tooth is knocked out, there may be blood. This is upsetting to the child and the adult attending to the emergency. Reassure the child, take a deep breath yourself, then:

- Find the tooth if possible, hold by the crown and place in milk or water
- Rinse the mouth with warm water and apply cold compress
- Call a dentist immediately

Play it safe with your family’s smile.

For more information contact:

- VIHA Child, Youth and Family Community Health Dental:
  - Saanich Health Unit 250-519-5100
  - Esquimalt Health Unit 250-519-5311
  - Peninsula Health Unit 250-544-2400
  - West Shore Health Unit 250-519-3490
  - Duncan Health Unit 250-709-3050
  - Nanaimo Public Health 250-739-5845
  - Port Alberni Public Health Services 250-731-1315
  - Comox Valley Health Unit 250-331-8520
  - Campbell River Health Unit 250-850-2110
  - Port Hardy Health Unit 250-902-6071
DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE A VISION PROBLEM?

Eyes are very important. This guide can help you to determine if your child might have a vision problem.

**Do your child’s eyes look abnormal?**
Eyes that turn in or out, eyelids that droop, or pupils that are different sizes may indicate your child has a vision problem. If there is swelling or crusting of the eyelids or pinkness in the eye itself, your child may have an infection.

**What is your child saying?**
If your child complains about headaches, sore eyes, blurred vision, words that jump or move around the page when reading or not being able to see the board, your child may have a vision problem.

**What are you and the teacher noticing?**
If you or the teacher notices your child tilts his/her head, covers one eye, rubs their eyes, frowns when concentrating on objects, has difficulty keeping their place when reading (uses a finger to follow along) or holds printed material in a strange position, your child may have a vision problem.

Other common signs of a vision problem are a lack of interest in activities that require concentrating on an object, lack of interest in reading, and daydreaming in class.

If you notice any of these problems or if there is a family history of vision problems, contact your eye doctor (optometrist). British Columbia’s Medical Services Plan provides some coverage for eye exams for children under the age of 18, and The Healthy Kids Program provides limited funds once in a twelve-month period for prescription eyewear for children 0 – 18 years living in low-income families.

For more information contact:
- Your local Public Health Unit
- Your local eye doctor (optometrist)
- HealthLinkBC or dial 8-1-1 (a free call)
TRICK OR TEETH!

When it comes to Halloween candy and tooth health, the "all or nothing" approach is best. Giving children their Halloween candy over days or weeks is not the best choice. The risk of tooth decay increases with the amount of sugar and the number of times teeth are exposed to it.

Tooth safe suggestions for enjoying Halloween treats are:

- Serve a healthy dinner (or snack) before trick-or-treating. You will know your child has eaten something nutritious on this exciting night.
- Limit the number of times teeth are exposed to sugar by encouraging children to eat treats at one sitting. Then, be sure to brush their teeth afterwards.
- Cut down on the number of sugary treats children receive by handing out "tooth-friendly" options like stickers, temporary tattoos, fancy pens and pencils, or toothbrushes!

And of course, remember to floss and brush with fluoride toothpaste before going to bed, or there could be some very scary results!

For more information contact:

- VIHA Child, Youth and Family Community Health Dental:
  
  Saanich Health Unit  250-519-5100
  Esquimalt Health Unit  250-519-5311
  Peninsula Health Unit  250-544-2400
  West Shore Health Unit  250-519-3490
  Duncan Health Unit  250-709-3050
  Nanaimo Public Health  250-739-5845
  Port Alberni Public Health Services  250-731-1315
  Comox Valley Health Unit  250-331-8520
  Campbell River Health Unit  250-850-2110
  Port Hardy Health Unit  250-902-6071
PEOPLE COME IN MANY SHAPES AND SIZES!
CELEBRATE WHAT YOUR BODY CAN DO!

Part of healthy living is being comfortable with your body. Parents, teachers and caregivers play an important role in helping children feel good about themselves.

Children’s bodies change and grow over time. Here are some tips to help children cope with changes in their bodies:

- Role-model acceptance of your own body.
- Avoid making comments about your child’s appearance as this puts too much focus on looks. Avoid making comments about your own or other people’s appearance.
- Let children know you love them just the way they are.
- Teach children to value qualities such as honesty and kindness in themselves and in others.

The most important thing you can do for your child is to role model healthy behaviours and attitudes. If you feel good about yourself, your children are more likely to feel good about themselves, too.

More information:

- Your local Public Health Unit
- HealthLinkBC and Dietitian Services or dial 8-1-1 and ask to speak to a Registered Dietitian (a free call)
- Kelty Mental Health Resources for Parents
- Being Me (Kindergarten to Grade 9): Activities and lessons to promote positive body image
EATING TOGETHER, EATING BETTER

With busy schedules, it can be hard to find time for family meals. Making the time for family meals is worth it.

Children who eat with an adult almost every day:
- Are more connected to their families and friends
- Do better in school
- Are less likely to engage in high risk behaviours like smoking, alcohol and drug use
- Have less risk of depression and suicide
- Make healthier food choices and are more likely to maintain healthy growth and weight

Not sure how to get started? Here are some ideas:

- Make family meals a priority. Schedule meals the same way you schedule other activities.
- Involve your children in planning, preparing and meal clean-up. Give everyone a job to do.
- Keep table talk positive and supportive. Focus on the good things that happened in everyone’s day, such as things learned at school, good deeds done, a book you are reading or a joke you have heard.

For more ideas and resources, check out Better Together!

Children and teens say eating together as a family is one of the things they like to do with their parents. Eating together is good for the whole family.

For more information:

- Your local Public Health Unit
- HealthLinkBC and Dietitian Services or dial 8-1-1 and ask to speak to a Registered Dietitian (a free call)
- Ellyn Satter Institute
MOVE MORE, SIT LESS!
UNDERSTANDING THE
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Bodies are made to move and children and youth need to be moving more. How much more? At least 60 minutes every day!

What types of activity?
- Heart-pumping aerobic activity like running, basketball, soccer and biking at least 3 days each week
- Strengthening activities 3 days a week like climbing and swinging at the playground, push-ups, running, and jumping rope

Parents who are active tend to have children who enjoy being active.

Adults need at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week. If you and your family are not meeting the recommendations, begin slowly and gradually increase the amount of time you spend being active. Find a few fun activities that the whole family can do together. If you need ideas, check your local recreation centre.

For more information:
- Your local Public Health Unit
- 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- ParticipACTION
- HealthLinkBC and Physical Activity Services or dial 8-1-1 (a free call)
SCREEN TIME AND YOUR CHILD

Kids are spending more time on screens than ever before. Screens are everywhere and are often used by teachers and students for school-related work. As with most things in life, there should always be a balance!

Too much screen time in children has been linked with:
- Sleep problems
- Reduced attention span and learning challenges
- Increased anxiety and depression
- Increased consumption of unhealthy foods
- Increased risk of overweight and obesity

The Canadian Sedentary Behaviour and Physical Activity Guidelines for children age 5-17 years recommend:
- Recreational screen time - Limit to less than 2 hours per day
- Physical Activity - At least 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity

Tips to help limit screen time and promote physical activity:
- Look at your own behaviours around screen time and physical activity - be a positive role model 😊
- Find an activity or sport your child likes!
- Be active as a family - schedule regular activities (walks, hikes, bocci ball, pickle ball)
- Sign up for an activity at your recreation centre

For more ideas and information including tips for parents, children and youth to navigate the digital world:
- Your local Public Health Unit
- Media Smarts
- Common Sense Media
- 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth
- Your local recreation centre
FEEDING THE LUNCH BUNCH

Lunch is an important time for children at school. The midday meal gives kids energy to concentrate, learn and be active all afternoon.

Choose a food from at least 3 of the 4 food groups to make a balanced lunch.

Make lunch interesting. Mix and match any of these ideas for a tasty, healthy lunch:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetables and Fruit</th>
<th>Grain Products</th>
<th>Meat and Alternatives</th>
<th>Milk and Alternatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Celery and carrot sticks or peppers  
• Sliced cucumber  
• Broccoli and cauliflower “trees”  
• Fresh, frozen or canned fruit | • Whole grain bread  
• Crackers  
• Mini bagels or buns  
• Tortilla  
• Roti or naan bread  
• Pita bread  
• Small muffins | • Lean meat  
• Tuna or salmon  
• Chili  
• Tofu and soy based products  
• Nuts and seeds  
• Bean spreads or dips  
• Eggs | • Milk  
• Chocolate milk  
• Yogurt  
• Cheese  
• Fortified soy beverage  
• Cottage cheese |

Kids are more likely to eat lunch when they help make it. Involve children in planning and packing lunches. Young children can wash fruits and veggies and can choose from what is offered. Older children can make their lunch with your help.

Pack a safe lunch
1. Wash your hands well with warm soapy water.
2. Pack your child’s lunch in an insulated lunchbox.
4. Keep cold foods cold with an ice pack.
5. Remind children to wash their hands before eating.
6. After school each day, wipe down your child’s lunchbox with warm soapy water.

For more information and great lunch ideas:
• Your local Public Health Unit
• HealthLinkBC and Dietitian Services or dial 8-1-1 and ask to speak to a Registered Dietitian (a free call)
• Healthy Families BC
• Better Together BC
• Cool Lunches (PDF)
HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

Want your child to feel good about themselves, enjoy eating healthy foods and have a healthy body weight? Help them develop a healthy relationship with food.

A healthy relationship with food means trusting children to know how much they need to eat in order to grow the way nature intended.

Ways to help your child develop a healthy relationship with food:

- Serve meals and snacks at about the same time each day so children know what to expect.
- Offer a variety of healthy foods. Offer your child the same foods as the rest of the family.
- Let your child decide how much to eat from the foods offered. Offer him small portions and provide more if he is still hungry.
- Trust your child to know how much to eat. If your child refuses to eat, remove uneaten food without comment. A skipped meal will not harm a healthy child.
- Never force or bribe your child to eat.
- Do not withhold food as punishment or offer it as a reward.

Healthy foods served in a relaxed family atmosphere are the best way to help children develop a healthy relationship with food:

- Sit down and eat with your child
- Turn off the TV, cell phones and other devices
- Keep family meals positive and supportive
- Enjoy food together

For more information:

- Your local Public Health Unit
- HealthLinkBC and Dietitian Services or dial 8-1-1 and ask to speak to a Registered Dietitian (a free call)
- Healthy Families BC
- Better Together BC
- www.ellynsatter.com
- Canada's Food Guide
MAKE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
PART OF THE DAY, EVERY DAY

Games, climbing, walking, biking, dancing... What do your kids like to do every day? Do they get outside and play? Children may just need the space and time to be active.

“Access to active play in nature and outdoors - with its risks - is essential for healthy child development. We recommend increasing children’s opportunities for self-directed play outdoors in all settings - at home, at school, in child care, the community and nature.” (Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play, 2015)

What are the benefits?

- Better sleep
- Better able to handle emotional challenges
- Better able to concentrate
- Stronger body, both inside and out

The benefits are clear, active kids are healthier and happier, both mind and body!

For more information contact:

- Your local Public Health Unit
- Your local Parks and Recreation
- 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth
- Bring Back Play
- HealthLinkBC and Physical Activity Services or dial 8-1-1 (a free call)