

Establishing Healthy Routines

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Parents play a big role in establishing routines because children model what their parents do. If you maintain a healthy lifestyle, your child is likely to follow your example. Consistent daily routines provide security for children. When they know what to expect, anxiety and stress are reduced.

Healthy Eating

- Provide well-balanced meals and limit caffeine and junk foods.
- Always make time for your child to have a good breakfast so he or she will be alert and able to pay attention and learn.

Exercise

- Try to do some type of physical activity for an hour every day (i.e. walking, bicycling, playing sports, etc.).
- Encourage children to accompany you when doing daily chores, such as walking the dog, washing the car, etc.

Sleep

- Maintain consistent bedtime and morning routines.
- Young children need approximately 10 hours of sleep each night.

Television and Computer/Internet Usage

- Limit the amount of time your child watches television and uses the computer each day.
- Monitor the types of programs that your child watches and the websites he or she visits.
- Turn off scary or violent television (for example, programs with vicious animals, monsters, natural disasters, stories involving death of a parent, etc.). Young children have a difficult time telling what is fantasy and what is real.

Social Skills

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By teaching and practicing the following social skills before the first day of school, your child will have a head start on learning to love kindergarten!

- Keep hands and feet to self; stay in his or her own space (not jumping on other children; walking while indoors).
- Follow directions the first time they are given without complaint.
- Put toys and other things away the way they were found.
- Practice whispering indoors.
- Your child will need to be able to ask adults for help by raising his or her hand while staying seated. You can practice this during dinner and TV times.
- Take turns to talk and play with you or with other children.
- Try to get your child into a playgroup before school starts. This can be with neighbors, through a community or church organization, or with family members.
- Teach your child about different feelings (happy, sad, mad, scared, lonely, etc.). Tell your child how you are feeling today and ask your child how he or she is feeling today. Do this every day. Do this several times a day. If your child says, "fine" or "bad", repeat what your child said, but with using feelings words such as happy, sad, mad, scared, and lonely. ("Oh, are you feeling fine and happy today?" or "Bad, huh? Are you feeling mad, sad, or scared when you are feeling bad?").
- Talk up school! Make your child excited about starting kindergarten and all of its new adventures!

