

March 9, 2023

Dear Kindergarten parent[s]/guardian[s],

Welcome to Kindergarten! VCH's school health programs provide immunizations, health information, and referrals for school-aged children, staff, and parents. A Public Health Nurse from your local health unit is also assigned to each school. In this letter you will find information about public health programs, services and resources to support your child and family. To view the information in this letter and other services and resources, scan the QR code.



Communicable Diseases and Immunizations

- **Routine Childhood Immunizations:** We recommend Kindergarten children be immunized before starting school. Children 4 years of age need a booster of Diphtheria, Pertussis (Whooping cough), Tetanus, Polio and a booster of Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Varicella (Chicken Pox). For more information visit immunizebc.ca.
 - Providing immunization records to public health helps us respond quickly to outbreaks in schools and helps everyone get back to learning as soon as possible. Since 2019, the collection of immunization information for school age students is also required by law. Please provide your child's immunization record when registering at your school or use the online school immunization reporting form on www.vch.ca/kindergarten.
 - If your child is not yet fully immunized, immunizations are available at your local public health unit, some family doctors or select local pharmacies.
- **How to prevent the spread of illness:** Parents play an important role in teaching children to wash their hands. Handwashing can become a lifelong healthy habit if you start teaching it at an early age. Hand washing with soap and water, for at least 30 seconds, is the best way to stop the spread of germs. Hand washing is important before and after eating, using the toilet, and blowing your nose.
- **What to do when your child is sick:** Students who are exhibiting symptoms of illness including respiratory and gastrointestinal illness should stay home until they are well enough to participate in regular activities. Those who are vomiting or have diarrhea should be symptom free for at least 24 hours before returning to school. For up to date information on childhood infections visit www.sneezesdiseases.com.

Healthy Living

- Active kids are healthy kids. Using active ways of travel (walking, biking, rolling etc.) to and from school and other places in the community has many benefits for kids' well-being and development. Healthy eating also helps children to have the energy to learn and play.

Dental, Hearing and Vision Health

- **Dental:** Children with healthy teeth have better mental and social well-being, and learn better at school. Tooth decay can be prevented with good daily dental care, nutrition and regular visits to the dentist or dental hygienist every six months.
- **Hearing:** The Hearing Screening Team visits Kindergarten students in every elementary school to screen for hearing loss and for medical conditions of the outer and middle ear.
- **Vision:** Good vision is important for children's learning and development. All children should see an optometrist before Kindergarten, to start school ready to learn.

Management of Medical Conditions in School

- Please let your school know if your child requires additional support at school for the management of anaphylaxis (severe allergy), diabetes, seizures, asthma and/or any other complex medical needs.

For more information regarding the topics in this letter, please visit the VCH website at www.vch.ca/kindergarten. If you have questions regarding health and safety resources, immunizations and communicable disease control, you can speak with a Public Health Nurse by calling your local public health unit. Best wishes for a safe and healthy school year.

Sincerely,

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