

# BACK TO SCHOOL 101: ROCKFORD EDITION



It's that busy time of year – getting kids back to school! At Rockford Pediatrics, we understand that there's a lot on parent's plates during the month of September. Here are some tips from our doctors on making the transition back to school a smooth one.

**Get some sleep** – Getting a good night's sleep is essential to your child being successful at school. Kids and teens with their growing bodies require more sleep than adults. Grade school children should get 9-12 hours of sleep per night and teenagers should get at least 8-10 hours! Getting your kids on a regular routine with a set bed time can facilitate the transition to getting up earlier in the morning as well.

**Eat breakfast every day** – We've all heard it before, but breakfast really is the most important meal of the day. Your child will need enough energy to make it through a long day of learning, potentially followed by an after-school sport or activity. The way to ensure they have the energy to tackle that long day is to provide a good breakfast, preferably with a source of protein (dairy, eggs, meat, nuts, etc).



**Plan healthy lunches** – Whether your child eats school lunch or packs a lunch for school – make sure they are getting a nutritious lunch. There should be a source of protein (meat, peanut butter, beans, or dairy) and a fruit or a veggie. Beverage should be water or low/non-fat milk. If they are buying a school lunch, ask them what they are getting. You can even go through the menu ahead of time with your child to give suggestions to make sure they are getting a well-rounded meal.

**Monitor screen time** – Children nowadays are surrounded by screens – phones, TVs, tablets, video games, computers, etc. Children should have less than 2 hours of recreational screen time per day. Children, teens and even adults can use some screen free time. Family dinner time is great way for the whole family to spend an hour off electronic devices. Modeling screen free time goes a long way to making a good impression on your children.

**Start homework habits early** – Help your child develop good homework habits – designate a location and a time. Their homework spot should be well lit, quiet and away from distractions like the TV. The best time to do homework is child dependent - they may do best to get it done right after school or they may need some time to unwind first. Find what works best for your child. It is ok to sit with your child when they do their homework, but make sure you aren't doing it for them. Remember that homework is their responsibility, not yours.



**Sports and sports physicals** - Sports are a great way for kids/teens to stay active, fit and involved. To participate in a school sport, most schools require a pre-participation physical (a.k.a. sports physical) to be completed. We can get your child into our office for their sports physical if needed. For more information on sports physicals, see our blog from last month.

**Update medication forms** - If your child needs to take a medication at school, the school will generally require that you have a medication form filled out, by either the parent or the physician if it is a prescription medication. Your pediatrician at Rockford Pediatrics can help you get that form filled out if necessary.

**Stay up to speed at school** - If you are concerned about your child's performance in school, don't wait for fall conferences to check in with their teacher. Let them know your concerns or any issues that have been brought up by previous teachers, so they can be aware of these issues from the start of the school year.

**Show interest in you child's day** - Use the drive home from school or family dinner time to hear about your child's school day. This is a great way to make sure your child is not being bullied, is making friends and paying attention in school.



**Keep them home when they are sick** – Your child should not go to school if they have a fever, are vomiting, or you feel they are contagious to other kids at school. If you are questioning whether to keep your child home from school, remember that Rockford Pediatrics has a walk-in hour from 8-9 am where our pediatricians can evaluate your child to see if they should stay home from school.