

March 8, 2024

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

Welcome to Kindergarten! In this letter, you will find guidance for helping your child stay healthy, and information about public health programs and resources available to you. For more information regarding the topics in this letter, please visit the VCH Kindergarten website by scanning the QR code attached.



Preventing Illness

Immunizations: We recommend children be fully 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). Immunizations are available at your local public health unit, some family doctors or select local pharmacies. Please provide your child's immunization record when registering at your school or use the online school immunization reporting form found by scanning the QR code above. Providing immunization records to Public Health helps us respond quickly to outbreaks in schools and is required by provincial regulation.

Preventing spread of illness: Hand washing with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds, is the best way to stop the spread of germs. Parents/guardians play an important role in teaching children to wash their hands.

When your child is sick: Children who are showing symptoms of illness, including fever, cough, runny nose, diarrhea, or vomiting, 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 48 hours before returning to school.

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.

Maintaining Good Health

Physical Activity: Active children can enjoy better mood and energy levels, greater attention and learning abilities, as well as physical and mental health. Physical literacy, or learning to move, is as important for your child's development as learning to read and do math. The Canadian 24-hour Movement Guidelines recommend kindergarten-aged children be physically active for at least an hour combined, get 9-11 hours of sleep, and have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day. Active transportation to/from school and encouraging outdoor and risky play at home are great ways to work towards these goals. For ideas on how to keep children and families moving, please visit <https://kelymentalhealth.ca/being-active>.

Healthy eating: When children eat a variety of nourishing foods, it can boost their mood, concentration, and energy levels. This helps them perform better in school and feel good about themselves, their bodies, and their abilities. Eating well is also about developing healthy attitudes and behaviors around food and eating. See our website www.vch.ca/en/supporting-healthy-eating-school for how to promote healthy eating, including healthy lunch ideas!

Dental: Our dental team visits Kindergarten students every few years to screen for tooth decay. We recommend brushing teeth with fluoridated toothpaste twice a day and flossing once per day, choosing water and milk over juice and other sugary drinks, and visiting a dentist/hygienist every six months.

Hearing: Hearing is important for children's learning and development. Our hearing screening team visits Kindergarten students in every elementary school annually to screen for hearing loss and for medical conditions of the outer and middle ear.

Vision: We recommend all children see an optometrist for vision testing before Kindergarten. BC Medical Services Plan covers vision check-ups once a year for children under 19, though some eye clinics may have additional charges for eye exams.

For more information regarding the topics in this letter, please visit www.vch.ca/kindergarten or scan the QR code above. If you have questions regarding health and safety resources, immunizations and communicable disease control, you can speak with the Public Health Nurse attached to your child's school by calling your local public health unit. Best wishes for a safe and healthy school year!

Sincerely,

Dr. Alex Choi, School Medical Officer (North Shore)

Dr. Meena Dawar, School Medical Officer (Richmond)

Dr. Molihi Khaketla, School Medical Officer (Coastal Rural)

Dr. Ceinwen Pope, School Medical Officer (Vancouver)