

## **School Suggestions and First Day Fears**

**By Bruce H. Berget, M.D., F.A.A.P.**

***Q: My child will be entering school for the first time. What do I need to know and do?***

A: In my experience, this first day of school is as emotionally traumatic for moms as it is for the young students, so moms (and dads) need to put on a brave face and be positive and enthusiastic about this landmark developmental milestone. We members of the American Academy of Pediatrics urge you to remind your child that he/she is not the only student who's a bit uneasy about the first day of school.

Remind older students transferring to a new school about previous year's experiences, and how anxiety turned into enthusiasm after a fun-filled first day. Teachers know that students are anxious and I'm confident that they will make an extra effort to comfort and welcome your little scholar. Point out the positive aspects of this new adventure: It will be fun. He or she will see old friends and meet new ones.

Network with another child in the neighborhood with whom your youngster can walk or accompany on the bus to school. If you feel it is appropriate, drive or walk your child to and from school on the first day. This can be the first lesson of the day, emphasizing safety-safe walking route, safe intersections with crossing guards, safe bus ride including boarding, exiting, and waiting.

Your child will need the Florida blue (immunization) and gold (physical exam) forms from his physician. Minimum vaccination requirements for school admission grades K-12 are listed in the table below. Most kindergarten and first graders will have had additional vaccines in accord with the Center for Disease Control Immunization Recommendations.

***Q: My older child is returning to school. Any suggestions?***

A: Parents please consider these issues:

- Backpack safety: use both wide padded straps on a pack with a padded back.
- Pack light: total pack weight should not be more than 10 – 20 % of the student's body weight.
- Study habits
  - Create an environment conducive to doing homework, i.e., a permanent workspace in your child's bedroom or elsewhere that offers privacy.
  - Set ample time for homework.
  - Establish a household rule that the TV stays off during homework time.
  - Be available to answer questions and offer assistance, but never do a child's homework for him or her.
  - To help alleviate eye, neck and brain fatigue it is recommended that youngsters take a 10 minute study break every hour and do something else.
  - If your child is struggling with a particular subject and you are unable to help, discuss using a tutor with your child's teacher.

Hopefully, the first day of the new school year will be an exciting and satisfying experience for your whole family.

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Vaccine Type	Minimum Number of Doses Required per Grade		
	Kindergarten	Grades 1-6	Grades 7-12
Diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DTaP) vaccine or age-appropriate tetanus vaccines	4 or 5	4 or 5	4 or 5
Hepatitis B (hep B) vaccine	3	3	2 or 3
Inactivated polio vaccine (IPV)	3 or 4	3 or 4	3 or 4
Measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine	2	2	2
Tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis (Tdap) vaccine or tetanus-diphtheria booster (Td)	0	0	1
<b>NEW! Varicella</b> (chickenpox) vaccine	2	Grades 1-7: 1 dose	