



Five Key Elements of Student Health

California State PTA and Dairy Council of California offer guidance for a healthy back-to-school season

Newly sharpened pencils, glue sticks, crisp new folders – these are the images parents often think of when getting their children ready for the back-to-school season. But heading back to school involves more than new school supplies and clothes. It's an important time to update your child's immunizations, make appointments for routine screening tests and inform the school of any health issues your child may have. Families can also use this time to create healthy eating routines, review their medical insurance and find out about access to affordable coverage.



To help parents prepare for the school year ahead, [California State PTA](#) and the [Dairy Council of California](#) offer five key elements of student health and wellness.

1. Regular Health and Dental Check-Ups

Children with poorer general health are less likely to graduate from high school on time or attend college. Diseases such as asthma, diabetes, obesity and tooth decay affect about 20-30 percent of children in California, which leads to more absenteeism and lower school performance. Regular health checkups and dental cleanings help detect and prevent problems early. Be sure to also make sure immunizations are up to date and have a list ready for your child's school. Affordable health coverage remains available for children and families through Covered California. The [ALL IN FOR HEALTH](#) campaign makes it easy for all parents and families to learn more about health coverage options.



2. Nutrition

Well-nourished students are fueled for learning. Just like a car won't run without gas, kids can't perform properly at school without food. A balanced eating pattern with foods from all of the food groups help children grow, learn and thrive in the classroom and beyond. Packing a healthy lunch for your child, or taking part in the school lunch program is another great way to make sure your child stays fueled for learning all day long. Additionally, nutrition education in the classroom can help students understand the importance of healthy eating from all the food groups and create or reinforce healthy habits at home that will last a lifetime.

3. Physical Activity

A significant body of research links regular physical activity with improved academic performance. Active play for 60 minutes a day improves students' brain functions, concentration, memory, overall grades and performance on standardized tests. Activity can happen anywhere, in the classroom, the gymnasium, even outside of school. Take a walk as a family or play tag together. The brain boosting benefits of physical activity are not limited to children.

4. Family Meals

Eating together as a family is also beneficial. Children who eat with their families regularly tend to eat healthier and have better nutritional status than those who do not. Family meals are also linked to improved language skills, better academic performance and a reduced risk of substance abuse and behavioral issues in students. The time spent together during a meal can also be a great time to engage your children about school and ask questions about what they learned. Family meals don't have to be fancy or limited to dinner. Eating breakfast together as a family is a great way to start the day.

5. Parent Engagement

Family involvement in children's lives has been shown to reduce children's health-risk behaviors, improve their attitudes toward school and learning, and improve academic achievement and student success. With recent changes to how schools are funded, every school district in California must develop a [Local Control and Accountability Plan \(LCAP\)](#) that describes how it will use funds to improve student achievement. Parents, community leaders, and students themselves have the opportunity to get engaged to set priorities and guide local decision making – including looking at what schools are doing to keep kids healthy and safe. Parents and community leaders can participate in a school health advisory committee and evaluate the school wellness policy on a regular basis.

Dairy Council of California provides nutrition education and resources to help parents and children lead healthier, more active lives. For more on the importance of nutrition and balanced family meals, visit www.HealthyEating.org/FamilyMeals.

For more back-to-school tips for parents and information on the importance of family engagement, visit www.capta.org. For more information about the work PTA is doing in schools and communities to promote effective health-education programs that support skill-building in children, youth and families to make healthy choices, take a look at the latest [Health Tidbits](#) newsletter.