



## BACK TO SCHOOL

### SAFETY TIPS FOR GRADESCHOOL AND COLLEGE STUDENTS

It's that time of year again – and here are a few safety tips for you and your family as you prepare for the new school year.

#### **BACKPACK SAFETY**

- Choose a backpack with wide padded shoulder straps and padded back.
- Pack light and organize to place heavier items close to the center of the backpack.
- Instruct children to always use both shoulder straps; slinging a backpack over one shoulder can cause muscle strain.
- Do not purchase backpacks on wheels for grade school children; these have caused many tripping injuries.

#### **TRAVELLING TO AND FROM SCHOOL**

- Make sure that all passengers wear seat belts and that you have age appropriate car and booster seats.
- If you use private bus transportation, request a copy of the company insurance policy and check the driver license of bus drivers. You can do this at [www.myflorida.com](http://www.myflorida.com) once you have the DL number. Click on “Floridian” and then click on “Licenses, Permits and Vital Records”, then click on “Driver License Check.”
- Educate your child about the dangers of moving around on buses and to keep their heads and arms inside bus windows at all times.
- Never let your young child walk alone to school; find a partner. Some communities have “walking school buses” in which groups of children are walked to and from school with an adult.
- Children who ride bicycles to school should always wear a helmet and bright colored clothing. Make sure they know and respect traffic rules.

#### **FOOD SAFETY AND HEALTHY EATING**

- If you pack lunch for your child, do not send foods that spoil easily without refrigeration such as mayonnaise or milk-based products. If you utilize these foods, purchase a thermos-type container or a cold pack to keep food chilled.
- Try to get your child to eat healthy, low-fat items such as fresh fruit, water and 100% fruit juice. Restrict your child's soda consumption, as one 12-ounce soft drink contains about 10 teaspoons of sugar. Purchase baked chips rather than fried and other healthier snacks; always look at the sodium content.

## **PLAYGROUNDS**

- Check your child's school playground for hazards such as rusted or broken equipment and dangerous surfaces. Report any deficiencies to the school immediately.
- Check for drawstrings on jacket hoods of younger children and remove them; these can cause strangulation injuries.

## **STRANGER DANGER**

- Talk to your children again about the dangers of talking to strangers and to be alert to and report suspicious people that may be around school grounds.

## **BULLYING AND VIOLENT BEHAVIOR**

- Help your child to respond to bullying by teaching them not to be afraid to report this behavior and to avoid being drawn in by simply walking away. They should report all verbal threats to a teacher and parent. Encourage your child to talk to you openly about this type of behavior.

## **STRESS**

- The new school year is a time of excitement and anxiety that can bring new opportunities and also new challenges. A new school year is also a time to develop new habits that can lessen the stressful consequences of a new school, new people and even a new city.
- Get regular, physical activity
- Eat a balanced diet and avoid excessive stimulants, such as caffeine.
- Get plenty of rest
- Get vaccinated
- Get regular check- ups – if your child is moving out of town to attend college, check to see whether your insurance company has a network of health providers in the city or town where they will attend college. Most large college campuses have a clinic.

## **Novel H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu) AND ILLNESS**

- The CDC (Centers for Disease Control) and the Office of Homeland Security expect that cases of the Novel H1N1 Influenza to surge once the school year begins and are urging parents not to send children to school if they are ill. Also, do not bring ill children to the workplace.
- Educate your children regarding frequent hand-washing and send along antibacterial wipes and hand sanitizers in their backpacks.
- The vaccine for this virus is expected to be available sometime in October.

For more information regarding Back to School Safety, please visit the following sites:

[www.cdc.gov/family/college](http://www.cdc.gov/family/college) , [www.aap.org/advocacy](http://www.aap.org/advocacy) , [www.rd.com](http://www.rd.com) .

*Prepared by Your Department of Risk Management Safety Unit*

[http://citynet/RiskManagement/pages/safety\\_unit/default.asp](http://citynet/RiskManagement/pages/safety_unit/default.asp)

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