Preparing for a Healthy School Year (Health Information)

Each year, there are a variety of tasks parents and students have to take care of before beginning school. Guilford County Department of Public Health wants to remind parents of some important steps they can take to ensure a healthy start to the school year for their child:

- Get all the required vaccinations for school entrance and attendance before school starts. According to North Carolina law, children who are entering the 6th grade in public school on or after August 1, 2008 **or** who are 12 years of age on or after August 1, 2008, must have a tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis (Tdap) booster shot if five or more years have passed since their last dose of this vaccine. Also, any student enrolling in a school, college or university for the first time on or after July 1, 2008 must have a second dose of the mumps vaccination (MMR – measles, mumps, rubella). These and any other vaccinations **required** by the state are provided free of charge at all local health departments. They are also available through your child's pediatrician's office.
- Consider getting the recommended vaccinations such as Influenza, HPV (Gardasil®), and MCV4 (Menactra®). Fees vary but most major insurance is accepted. Vaccinations (shots) help protect children from serious illness. To make an appointment for an immunization at the Department of Public Health, call 641-5563 in Greensboro or 845-7655 in High Point.
- Once you know your children's shots are up to date, make sure you have written proof of this (a shot record). Be prepared to present this to school officials or your school nurse.
- If you have a child who will be starting kindergarten this year, you must schedule and obtain a completed physical exam for your child before school begins. The form that must be completed is available at your child's school.
- Begin re-establishing the school routine: early to bed, early to rise.

Once the school year has begun, it is important for parents or caregivers to do the following:

- Make sure your child's school has an emergency contact and telephone number in case your child becomes sick or is injured during the school day. Be sure to keep this number updated.
- Send written instructions on who is allowed to pick up your child from school.
- Provide the school with information as soon as possible on any significant medical conditions your child may have, such as asthma, diabetes, severe allergies, sickle cell or seizures.
- If your child must take any medications during the school day, you must provide these medications in the original bottle or carton and with a completed medication form. This form is available at your child's school.
- Notify the school of any "life changing" event that may affect your child's behavior or school performance (death in the family, divorce, etc.).

Finally:

- Make sure your child has a healthy breakfast every morning. A glass of milk or juice, along with some cereal, toast or other grain, and a protein, such as cheese or yogurt, hard boiled egg or rolled piece of turkey, is a good start. Stay away from sweet rolls, donuts, soda and fruit-flavored drinks.

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- Send healthy snacks for break time. Graham crackers, a piece of fruit or baby carrots are all good suggestions. Healthy snacks for school parties are also encouraged.
- Limit television time at home; talk, read or play outside more.
- Make sure your child gets enough sleep at night, 10 to 11 hours for elementary age children.
- Get to know your school nurse.
- Teach your child good hygiene habits, such as bathing, tooth brushing, hand washing, coughing/sneezing into his sleeve and dressing for the weather.
- Consider organizing the next day's clothing selections and getting all needed paperwork signed the night before.
- Give lots of love, praise and attention to your child.

For more information about starting this school year more healthfully, contact the School Health Program of the Guilford County Department of Public Health at 641-7777.