

# Back to School

Parents, children and teachers will venture into a new territory when schools open up in September. Parents face the challenge of getting kids ready for back to school after being home for 6 months. Not only do routines at home have to be established, parents must prepare their children for the new safety protocols at their schools.

**Here are some tips on:**

- [How to reduce anxiety in children](#)
- [How to get back into a school routine](#)
- [How to prepare your child to wear masks at school](#)

# How to support your child's mental health while they return back to school

The return to school will be exciting for many students and parents, but, others will be feeling anxious or frightened.

[School Mental Health Ontario](#) has created a guide for parents on how to support your child's mental health while returning back to school.

- ★ **Stay calm**  
It's important that parents and families are able to recognize and acknowledge their own feelings about returning to school plans in order to support their child's emotions. This is a very difficult time for everyone. Ensuring you have your own support system that you can share your feelings with will be important to be able to support your child.
- ★ **Listen**  
Let your child talk through their feelings. Acknowledge and validate their feeling and emotions and help them identify or label how they are feeling. Share some of the positive aspects of returning to school such as seeing teachers and their friends.
- ★ **Keep information age appropriate**  
Answer questions as factual as possible but keep it age related. As parents we try to keep our kids safe by being overly positive. This is called toxic positivity which results in denial and minimization of our true emotions.
- ★ **Be patient and Understanding**  
You may notice behaviour changes in your children as the the return to school gets closer. Children will react differently to changes in routines. Try to understand your children and remain calm with them and keep reassuring them that their safety is priority.

# How to Get Back Into a School Routine

Children will be heading back to school after six months off. Many parents will be anxious about getting them back to school and back on a routine. At least one week before school get your children back on a school day routine.



## Sleep Routine

Get a sleep routine back on track. Give children time to make adjustments to their bedtime and wake up routine. Sticking to a routine will condition your child to feel sleepy at similar time every night.

### Tips

- Start a lights out routine to help establish a timely pre bedtime process.
- Try soothing things to get them sleepy such as a warm bath, teeth brushing, brew a hot drink, or warm milk and reading before bed.

## Gradually Reduce Technology Use

The internet has been great source of entertainment, and educational resource since closure, but it is time to start reinforcing boundaries again.

### Tips

- Reduce time on mobile phones, tablets, computers, or video games at least an hour before bedtime.
- If a mobile device is used as an alarm clock, invest in a traditional clock instead.



## Build/Prepare a daily school routine at home

- ❖ Packing a bag
  - Make a list of back to school items and prepare their backpack for the first day. I.e. Change of clothing for younger kids, masks, sanitizers, pen, pencils, notebooks, etc.
- ❖ Laying clothes out for first week
  - Let your child pick out their favourite outfits for school.
- ❖ Practice making lunches
  - Ask your child to help plan lunches for the first week of school
- ❖ Bath time
  - Have a consistent bath time.
- ❖ Try eating breakfast at a similar time they normally would during school

Click [here](#) for tips to prepare before the first day of school and [here](#) for a back to school checklist.

### Additional Resources:

- ❖ Check out [how to support your child going back to school](#)
- ❖ Visit [School Mental Health Ontario Q & A](#) about going back to school

# How to Prepare Your Child to Wear Masks at School

As schools prepare to open in September, wearing a mask all day at school will be the new normal for our children. Be honest about why we have to wear masks (to keep others safe and keep ourselves safe from sickness), but don't be scary.

## Practice wearing face masks at home

If your child is resistant to wearing masks limit the time they wear masks.

### Strategies

- Set a timer
- Wear a mask for the length of a favourite song
- Put mask on and take selfies of goofy faces with just your eyes
- Play dress up as a doctor, dentist, or favourite superhero
- Try different masks to ensure they fit comfortably

## Make your mask your own

- Try a variety of styles and fabrics to find one that your child is most comfortable in for the day
- Include your child in picking out a face mask
- Let your child decorate their own masks with stickers or fabrics

Click [here](#) for mask information from the Thunder Bay District Health Unit!

