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OHIO School-Based Health Alliance
Healthy kids learn better

know
Prevention Tips for Everyone

KNOW! HOW TO KEEP KIDS HEALTHY AND READY TO LEARN



Keeping kids healthy helps them feel their best and stay ready to learn. Even when children feel well, annual well-child checks offer opportunities to identify concerns early, stay current on vaccines and screenings, and build a trusted relationship with a healthcare provider. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends these yearly visits for children and teens.[3] This Know! Tip explores how caregivers can prepare kids for checkups and connect with school-based health centers to make care more accessible.

Prevention Action Alliance

HEALTHY KIDS LEARN BETTER: THE IMPORTANCE OF ANNUAL WELL-CHILD CHECKS

When kids feel fine, a trip to the doctor can feel like one more thing on an already full calendar. But an annual checkup, or a well-child check, is one of the simplest and most powerful things caregivers can do to protect a young person's health. These visits are a chance to catch concerns early, stay on track with vaccines and screenings, and build a trusted relationship between your child and a healthcare provider who knows them well.

The Ohio School-Based Health Alliance puts it simply: healthy kids learn better. When health needs go unaddressed, kids are more likely to miss school, struggle to focus, and fall behind. In Ohio, more than a quarter of K-12 students were chronically absent during the 2024-2025 school year.[1] Many Ohio families face real barriers to care. About 1 in 5 school-age children in Ohio do not have a place to go or a person to see when they are sick, and only about half have a "medical home," a consistent, trusted source of coordinated care.[2]

WHAT HAPPENS AT A WELL-CHILD CHECK?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends an annual well-child check for children and teens, even when families have no concerns.[3] A typical visit includes:

- Tracking growth and development
- Vision and hearing screenings
- Making sure vaccines are up to date
- Checking in on sleep, nutrition, physical activity, and emotional well-being
- Screening for depression and anxiety, especially for older kids and teens
- Time for your child to ask questions and, as they get older, some private time with the provider

TALKING WITH YOUR KIDS ABOUT WELL-CHILD CHECKS

By engaging with healthcare providers for their own care and starting conversations with their children, caregivers help kids see health care as a normal, positive part of life rather than something that only happens when they are sick or hurt. Try these conversation starters:

- **"Do you remember last time we went to a checkup?How did it go?"**
- **"How do you feel when you know there's a doctor's visit coming up?"**
- **"Is there anything new or different about your body, your sleep, or your feelings that you think we should ask the doctor about?"**

Before the visit, help your child write down a question or two. During the visit, encourage them to speak up and answer their provider's questions in their own words. On the way home, talk about what they learned. These small steps help kids build confidence and the skills to manage their own health as they grow into adulthood.

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KNOW YOUR OPTIONS: SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS

If finding a provider, getting time off work, or arranging transportation makes checkups hard, a school-based health center (SBHC) may be a good option for your family. SBHCs are an evidence-based model of health care delivery in which care is delivered in a school building or on a school campus. SBHCs are created through a collaborative partnership between the community, the school, and a health care organization, such as a children's hospital or community health center, that already specializes in preventive pediatric care. With a parent or guardian's consent, SBHCs provide comprehensive primary care, including well-child visits, immunizations, and sick visits. In the 2024-25 school year alone, Ohio's SBHCs provided well-child visits to more than 20,000 young people.[4]

SBHC staff not only remove barriers and meet the needs of students and families but also work to align healthcare and education systems to support students' academic success. Because care happens at school, kids can be seen and return to class quickly, and caregivers don't have to miss work. SBHCs keep parents and caregivers involved through the parent/caregiver consent process and ongoing communication.

Many SBHCs also offer behavioral health, dental, and vision care, and serve students' siblings and family members, school staff, and the wider community. To find a school-based health center near you, visit the Ohio SBHC Census map, which shows each center's location, services offered, and population served.

PARTNER WITH YOUR SBHC TEAM

SBHC staff are partners in your child's health. In a familiar school setting, providers can notice changes and follow up quickly. Strengthen that partnership with these steps:

- Introduce yourself and your child at a school event or first visit.
- Complete a consent form before care is needed so it is on file when your child feels ill.
- Share health history, medications, and concerns, and keep contact information current.
- Ask how staff will communicate about visits, test results, and follow-up care.
- Share changes in your child's mood, sleep, eating, or school performance.
- Ask about connections to dental, vision, or behavioral health care and resources for food or transportation.
- Encourage your child to ask SBHC staff questions and see them as trusted adults.

RESOURCES

- Find an SBHC Near You
- Your Child's Checkup – List by Age
- Making the Most of Your Child's Health Appointments: Parent Tips

SOURCES

1. https://reportcardstorage.education.ohio.gov/2025appsettings/State_Report_Card.pdf?se=2031-07-28T05:10:18Z&sig=nPOvW%2Br2caitHi%2F8WhYwU7xqalHo0dFrudeJq%2B%2Bmyuo=&sp=rlx&spr=https&srt=sco&ss=b&st=2021-07-27T21:10:18Z&sv=2020-08-04
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