

Add a trip to the doctor to your child's back-to-school list

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Credit: Loyola University

When checking your child's back-to-school list, make sure that getting a

physical is on the top of the to-do list.

Although summer has reached only the midway point, it's never too early to schedule a back-to-school visit with your child's pediatrician or primary care doctor, said Michael Stokas, MD, MS, pediatrician and internist at the Loyola Center for Health at Hickory Hills.

"If you wait too long to book your appointment, your doctor's schedule might not have any openings before the school year starts," Dr. Stokas said. "Doctors don't want to just squeeze you in because these visits take time to do correctly. We want to have enough time together to address any potential issues early and provide appropriate counseling before the school year when they can be harder to resolve."

Children entering kindergarten, sixth grade and ninth grade are required by the state of Illinois to have a back-to-school physical done before the first day. A sports physical performed for camp or a team sport does not count.

In addition, all incoming kindergarteners are required to have a vision test.

When coming in for the appointment, Dr. Stokas reminds families to bring any forms that need to be completed. This includes not just the standard physical form, but any documentation needed by the school to allow a child's medication to be administered on school property.

Also, if your child has received vaccines anywhere other than your [primary care](#) physician's office, it is important to bring the vaccine records to the visit.

Finally, if you have any concerns about your child's health, bring a list of the most important questions you want to address, including concerns

about diet and nutrition, sleep, allergies, medications and overall development.

"No matter the age of your child, annual exams ensure previous problems are adequately addressed, assess appropriate growth and development, and provide guidance to make certain your child is as healthy as they can be," Dr. Stokas said. "These visits provide the confidence for your [child](#) to start the [school](#) year healthy."

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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