

Tips for a healthy school year

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After a year of full or partial distance learning, many students will be headed back into a physical classroom this fall. In this Mayo Clinic Minute, Dr. Nipunie Rajapakse, a pediatric infectious diseases physician at Mayo Clinic Children's Center, offers some tips for a healthy school year.

"Going into the [school year](#), it's probably going to be another kind of challenging year for kids and families," she says.

Rajapakse says making sure your child has a healthy return to school starts with having conversations.

"Let them know what to expect when they return to school," she says.

For example, talk about if people will be wearing masks and if they will be expected to wear a mask. If your student is eligible, talk with him or her about COVID-19 vaccinations.

It's not just COVID-19. Rajapakse says trends continue to show kids 12 and younger are falling behind in other childhood vaccinations.

"This is a really great time, in the weeks leading up to return to [school](#), to make sure your child, even if they can't get the COVID-19 [vaccine](#), is up to date on all other routine vaccinations."

She also suggests parents pay attention to their kid's mental health as they adjust to returning to the classroom.

"We've seen a significant increase in [mental health issues](#) in children and teenagers over the pandemic—increases in depression, anxiety and social isolation. There is quite the adjustment that we expect kids will need to make, especially those who were (participating in) fully online schooling all of last year," says Rajapakse.

Don't hesitate to talk to your child's primary care physician if you notice any concerns.

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