Medical Xpress

# Put your child's health on the back-to-school checklist

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QUT experts say back-to-school health checks are important for helping kids stay on top of the learning curve.

Books and uniforms shouldn't be the only thing on parents' back-to-school checklist.

QUT experts warn that health checks are just as important for helping kids stay on top of the learning curve.

The university's Health Clinics at Kelvin Grove have run back-to-school podiatry checks, vision screenings and dietitian assessments for several years. The clinics' optometrists found around half of children screened

needed further assessment.

Podiatrist and Faculty of Health academic Matthew Triggs said having the right shoes for the schoolyard was as important as having the correct texts books for the classroom.

"All feet are slightly different in shape, size and how they function and, as podiatrists, we assess your child and recommend the types of shoes that best support their specific needs - for school and for any specific sporting activities," Mr Triggs said.

"Parents are very capable of picking up on potential foot issues so trust your instincts and come in if you have any concerns.

"Early intervention will prevent long-term foot problems, which will save your child potentially a lot of pain and yourself a lot of money in future treatment."

An assessment with a dietitian will help parents improve the nutritional value of their child's diet at the dinner table as well as in the lunch box.

QUT academic and Health Clinics dietitian Aimee Jackson said the back-to-school dietitian assessment was particularly helpful for fussy eaters.

"We work closely with both the parents and the child to identify and put in place key strategies for introducing a broader variety of food into their diets, and it's amazing how well the children respond when we give them some ownership in the process," Ms Jackson said.

"There's a lot of focus on children's diets at the moment and we see many parents who are concerned their child is underweight or overweight and isn't eating enough healthy foods".

"Often our assessments show they're either tracking well or would benefit from a few simple strategies to improve their nutritional intake - and that in itself can save you a lot of unnecessary worry or fights at the dinner table."

Ms Jackson said dietitians can also identify food allergies and intolerances and provide help with managing them.

Parents can seek advice from their GP about podiatrists, dietitians and optometrists in their local area.

Red flags - vision problems:

- rubbing eyes
- squinting
- headaches
- concentration difficulties.

Red flags - podiatry problems:

- pain
- tripping and/or falling
- family history of foot problems
- asymmetry (uneven function) of the feet or legs
- medical conditions that can affect the feet.

Healthy lunch box tips:

- Include a serve of whole fruit. It's both cheap and healthy.
- Sneak in some veggies. Children will often eat raw carrot or green beans even if they don't like them cooked. Also try a tub of cherry tomatoes or lettuce and avocado on their sandwich.

- Include a frozen milk drink. Not only does it provide a serve of dairy, it will also prevent their lunch from spoiling in the hot weather.

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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