



HEALTH NEWS

Health Information For Students and Their Families

Welcome back to the 2025-2026 school year. Send in updated medication permission forms and emergency contact information ASAP. Please keep your child home if they have a fever, vomiting, or contagious illness. Partnering with families is the best way to keep our students safe, healthy, and ready to learn. Please reach out anytime if your child has a new diagnosis, allergy, or health concern—we work together to keep every student safe and ready to learn!

Childhood Obesity in New Jersey: What Families Can Do

Did you know that about one in six children in New Jersey are considered obese? Childhood obesity is more than just a number on the scale—it increases the risk of type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, joint problems, and low self-esteem. The good news is that families, schools, and communities can work together to help children build healthy habits and maintain a healthy weight.

Why It Matters

Children who are obese are more likely to carry those health risks into adulthood. They may also struggle socially and emotionally, facing bullying or difficulties with confidence. Preventing unhealthy weight gain early on is one of the best ways to support long-term health.

Research from Project EAT shows that family meals and supportive home environments improve kids' dietary quality and body confidence.

Tips for Families

Encourage Active Play: Aim for at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day. Activities like biking, walking the dog, dancing, or sports count.

Make Healthy Eating a Family Goal: Serve more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Limit sugary drinks like soda and juice—water and milk are better choices.

Mind Portion Sizes: Help children learn to listen to their hunger cues and avoid oversized portions.

Limit Screen Time: Too much time on phones, tablets, or TV can reduce activity levels. Encourage breaks and outdoor play.

Model Healthy Behaviors: Children often follow what adults do—when parents and caregivers make balanced food choices and stay active, kids are more likely to do the same.

Moving Forward

Every small change makes a difference. Families don't need to be perfect; instead, focus on gradual, sustainable habits. Together, we can help New Jersey children grow up strong, healthy, and ready to succeed.

Flu Season Is Here – Stay Healthy!

Flu season in the U.S. typically runs from **October through May**, with peak activity usually between **December and February**.



Now is the time to take steps to protect yourself and others.

The **best defense** against the flu is the **annual flu vaccine**, recommended for everyone 6 months and older. Getting vaccinated helps reduce the risk of illness, missed school days, and the spread of the virus in our community.

Other ways to stay healthy:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or elbow
- Stay home when feeling sick
- Disinfect commonly touched surfaces regularly

Let's work together to keep our school safe and healthy all flu season long!

For more information, contact your school nurse.

Digital devices are here to stay—and they can be powerful tools for learning and connection. But like any tool, they're best used with clear boundaries and balance. This school year, families can support healthy digital habits by setting routines, encouraging physical activity, and staying actively engaged in how students use their devices.

Sleep is not a luxury—it is essential for health, learning, and emotional well-being.



Digital Wellness: Managing Screen Time This School Year

As students return to school this fall, families are once again navigating the challenge of balancing academics, social activities, and downtime. With phones, laptops, and gaming systems always within reach, excessive screen time has become one of the fastest-growing health concerns among adolescents in New Jersey and across the country.

Why It Matters

Research has linked overuse of digital devices to a range of issues in children and teens, including:

Sleep disruption – Blue light from screens suppresses melatonin and delays healthy sleep cycles.

Physical health problems – Long hours of sedentary screen use are associated with headaches, eye strain, and increased risk of weight gain.

Mental health impacts – Studies suggest higher rates of anxiety, depression, and attention difficulties in adolescents who spend more than 3–4 hours daily on recreational screen use.

A 2023 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that U.S. teens now spend an average of 7–9 hours per day on screens outside of schoolwork—a number that has steadily increased since the pandemic.

What Families Can Do

The good news: small changes at home can make a big difference in a child's overall health and well-being. Try these strategies this school year:

Create “**No-Phone Zones.**” Set clear rules around screen-free spaces like the dinner table, bedrooms, or during homework time.

Encourage Movement. Aim for at least **60 minutes of physical activity** daily. Pair screen time with active breaks, such as stretching or going for a walk.

Model Balance. Children notice adult habits. Put your own phone aside during meals and family time to set a healthy example.

Use Smart Tools. The Family Media Plan from the American Academy of Pediatrics helps parents and kids work together to set age-appropriate screen time limits.

Additional Resources:

CDC: Screen Time vs. Lean Time – [cdc.gov/screen-time](https://www.cdc.gov/screen-time)

American Academy of Pediatrics: Family Media Plan – [healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org)

Common Sense Media – [commonsensemedia.org](https://www.commonsensemedia.org) (guides, ratings, and tips for families navigating technology use)

The Hidden Impact of Sleep on Student Success



Most New Jersey students are still not getting the recommended 8–10 hours of sleep per night.

Why Sleep Matters:

- Only 23% of U.S. teens get the recommended hours (CDC, 2023).

- Teens sleeping less than 8 hours face higher risks of anxiety and depression. It can make them more irritable, affect their focus, and increase their likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors (MDPI, 2023).

- Research from Cambridge & Fudan Universities (2025) shows longer sleep improves reading, vocabulary, and problem-solving skills.

Long-Term Risks:

Chronic sleep deprivation raises risks of substance use, obesity, suicidal thoughts, and poor emotional regulation (AP News, 2023). Oversleeping on weekends can backfire, disrupting circadian rhythms (NY Post, 2025).

Tips for Families:

- Set a consistent bedtime and wake time, even on weekends.
- Keep devices out of bedrooms to prevent late-night scrolling.
- Encourage relaxing wind-down routines such as reading, journaling, or soft music.
- Advocate for later school start times—aligned with CDC and AAP recommendations.

Sleep Struggle: <8 hours → Anxiety, depression, poor attention, mood swings
Variable schedule → Circadian disruption, poor performance
Better sleep → Stronger cognition, improved focus, emotional stability

Additional Resources:

CDC Teen Sleep Recommendations:
www.cdc.gov/sleep

American Academy of Pediatrics – Healthy Sleep:
www.aap.org

NJAAP School Start Time Advocacy:
www.njaap.org/start-times