

# 5 Expert Mental Health Tips to Help Kids Start Preparing for School This Summer

For parents and caregivers looking to get a head-start on helping their child prepare for back-to-school, we asked our child and youth mental health workers for their advice on what steps you can take now to make things a little easier come September.

## TIP #1

### Start early

For many kids, it's normal that schedules and routines change over the summer. Add to that, school has been inconsistent in Ontario the entire year. You can start now to ease your kids back into a normal, familiar routine. Consider gradually shifting sleep and wake times, reducing screen time, and ensuring meals are happening at predictable times.

## TIP #2

### Talk about school

While none of us wants to rush the end of summer, it can be helpful to start having open conversations with your kids about school. You could ask questions about what they might need to be successful at school this year or ask about any fears or concerns they might have about it. Some kids may also benefit from being able to visit the school – or the school playground – through the summer.

## TIP #3

### Brush up on social skills

If your child or teen has been particularly isolated, try to look for ways to incorporate socialization into your summer activities. Try creating a plan together. A question like “I know socializing is easier when you're at school, but what are some ways you might like to connect with your friends through the summer?” can be a good way to start the conversation.

## TIP #4

### Address concerns about COVID-19

When it comes to returning to in-person learning, your child or teen might have anxiety, worries, or fears linked to COVID-19. Some kids will be experiencing school COVID-19 protocols for the first time and summer is a good time to begin practicing things like mask wearing and handwashing. This is also a good time to talk about your family's needs and expectations when it comes to managing COVID-19. For example, you might consider putting rules in place regarding inviting friends' home from school. Kids might fall into old routines, so it's important to be clear about any new expectation.

## TIP #5

### Check in with yourself

As parents and caregivers, it's also important that we check in with ourselves. Are there fears we have about our child returning to school? Checking in with ourselves and our own mental health will help us to be more aware of what we might be unknowingly projecting on to our kids.

For more back-to-school resources and tips, visit [family.cmho.org](https://family.cmho.org).

#### Find Help

Children's Mental Health Ontario has 4,000 child and youth mental healthcare workers across Ontario ready to help parents and their children. Depending on your needs, we can connect you to child mental health professionals that will most help you and your family.



[www.cmho.org/findhelp](https://www.cmho.org/findhelp)

[www.compassne.ca](https://www.compassne.ca)



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