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HSHS Southern Illinois hospitals encourage back-to-school health and safety

(BREESE, GREENVILLE, HIGHLAND, IL) – As a new school year begins, HSHS St. Joseph's Hospitals in Breese and Highland, and HSHS Holy Family in Greenville encourage everyone to make the health and safety of your family a priority. Every parent wants their child to have a successful year, and taking time to consider their needs for health and safety can help them start the year off right.

1. **Make sure your child is up-to-date on all vaccinations.** Review your child's shot records and make sure that he or she is up-to-date on all shots before heading back to school.
2. **Obtain a physical.** School and sports physicals are an important part of each school year, even if they are not mandated by the school. Yearly physicals enable your health care provider to monitor growth and development, update immunizations, determine risks for sports participation, and discuss safety issues.
3. **Make healthy choices.** Talk to your child about healthy food choices at home and at school. Most schools send school cafeteria menus home enabling you to plan your child's lunches in advance. Pack a nutritious lunch on days your child prefers not to eat the school's main course. Go over the menu with your child and discuss the nutritional value of what is being offered. Steer them away from soda and dessert and toward low-fat milk and fresh fruit.
4. **Play sports safely.** If your child participates in sports, schedule a sports physical with your doctor and speak with your child about sports safety. Make sure your child has required safety equipment for her/his sport, and know the concussion ABCs – Assess the situation, Be alert for signs and symptoms, and contact a health care professional.

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5. **Be good to your back.** Choose a backpack with wide shoulder straps and make sure your child uses both straps evenly across the back. Having all the weight over one shoulder can lead to muscle strain. Advise your child to pack lightly. A backpack should never weigh more than 10-20 percent of your child's body weight.
6. **Fight the spread of germs.** Before your child goes back to school make sure he or she understands the importance of proper hand washing. Soap and water can do wonders in reducing your child's risk of illness. A child should wash their hands properly before eating and after using the restroom. Encourage them to sing or hum the alphabet to know how long they should scrub their hands with soap and water.
7. **Turn off the screens.** Set a limit to screen time of two hours or less each day.
8. **Get enough sleep.** Make sure your child is getting an adequate amount of sleep at night to help aid in their overall health. School-aged children need at least 10 hours a day of sleep.
9. **Be safe while on the roads.** Children should always use a seatbelt and placed in car seats appropriate for their age. Talk to your child about safety while at the bus stop and crossing roads.

For more information on back to school health, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/family/kids/>. You can also learn tips on protecting your children from injury at <https://www.cdc.gov/safekid/>.

All three HSHS Southern Illinois Division hospitals in Breese, Greenville and Highland have walk-in clinic options for your family for those times when your doctor is unavailable but you don't necessarily need an emergency room. To find out more about their locations and hours of operation in your area, visit their web sites:

- HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital Breese: Immediate Care in Carlyle and New Baden Health Center – stjoebreese.com/walkinclinics
- HSHS Holy Family Hospital: Convenient Care in Greenville – hshsholyfamily.org
- HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital Highland: PrimeCare in Highland – stjosephshighland.org

HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital Breese, HSHS Holy Family Hospital in Greenville and HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital Highland are part of the Southern Illinois Division of Hospital Sisters Health System, which also include HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital in O'Fallon and HSHS St. Anthony's Memorial Hospital in Effingham.

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About Hospital Sisters Health System

Hospital Sisters Health System's (HSHS) mission is to reveal and embody Christ's healing love for all people through our high quality, Franciscan health care ministry. HSHS provides state-of-the-art health care to our patients and is dedicated to serving all people, especially the most vulnerable, at each of our 15 Local Systems and physician practices in Illinois (Breese, Decatur, Effingham, Greenville, Highland, Litchfield, O'Fallon, Shelbyville and Springfield) and Wisconsin (Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, Oconto Falls, Sheboygan, and two in Green Bay). HSHS is sponsored by Hospital Sisters Ministries, and Hospital Sisters of St. Francis is the founding institute. For more information about HSHS, visit www.hshs.org. For more information about Hospital Sisters of St. Francis, visit www.hospitalersisters.org.