

School Health Centers and Your Child

School health centers are becoming more and more common. Most handle medical emergencies, provide health screenings and refer students to doctors for health problems. A growing number of these centers also offer health services such as immunizations and physical examinations.

Therapies for children with special needs may also be available.

School health centers can provide important health care to students who need it. However, it is important that your child's pediatrician stay involved in that care. While school-based centers are convenient, your child's own pediatrician remains his or her best source for health supervision and medical care.

Many parents assume that because a school health clinic and the regular school health office exist side-by-side, that they communicate and work together well. Unfortunately this is not always what occurs. Parents need to stay involved.

What you can do:

- Make sure that your child's school nurse, counselor or health center staff routinely contact your pediatrician about his medical care.
- Check with your school's regular health office and your school's clinic to be sure that they work together. Give them permission to exchange health information that is important for keeping your child healthy in school. Be certain that they keep you informed.
- Continue to take your child to his pediatrician for regular preventive health care. This is important even if he or she has many of his or her health needs met at school.
- Stay involved in the health education, the health services and the supervision that your child receives at school.

Your Child Needs A Medical Home

All children and teens need a "medical home." This means health care that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This care is coordinated by one team of pediatric health care professionals.

A medical home is family centered. Your pediatrician knows you and your child. Mutual trust develops.

When your child or teen has a medical home, she or he receives ongoing medical care. Care is provided based on your child's medical history. If she or he graduates or transfers to another school, her or his medical home remains the same.

Signs of a Good School Health Program

- The staff works in partnership with other community health and social service programs.
- Students and parents sit on its administrative board. This board makes group decisions about the health care that is provided.
- The center helps students who do not have a medical home find one.
- The center assists in arranging health insurance for students who need it.
- It is easily accessible for all students.
- It provides quality health care that focuses on the long-term needs of each student.

This information is based on the American Academy of Pediatrics' policy statement School Health Centers and Other Integrated School Health Services, published in January 2001. Parent Pages offers parents relevant facts that explain current policies about children's health.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

From your doctor

American Academy
of Pediatrics



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American Academy of Pediatrics
PO Box 747
Elk Grove Village, IL 60009-0747
Web site — <http://www.aap.org>

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