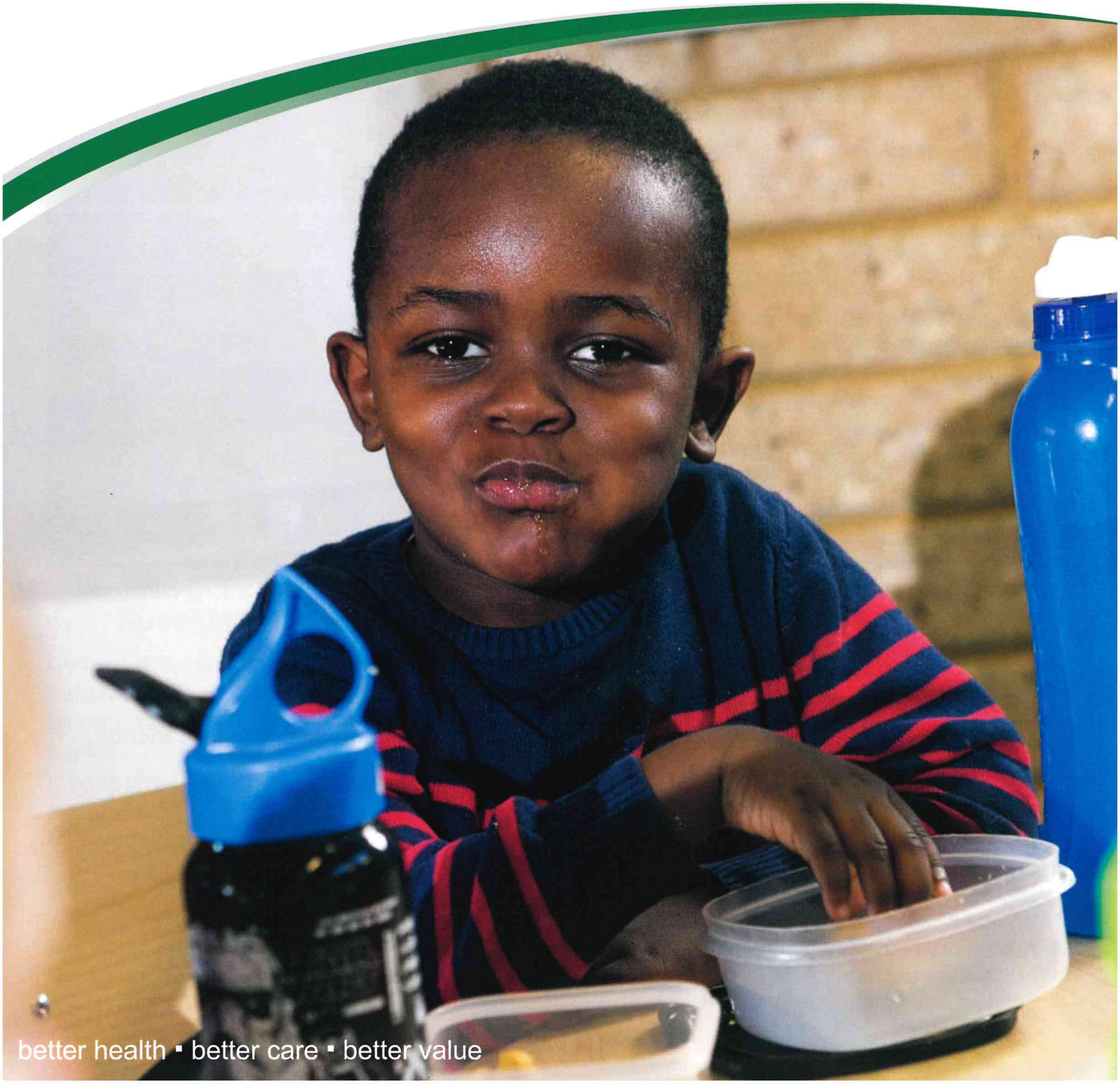
Government of **Western Australia**
Child and Adolescent Health Service
WA Country Health Service

ten top tips for a great start to school



better health • better care • better value



Going to school for the first time is a big event for you and your child! There are lots of things you can do to help your child prepare for school.

1. Talk about feelings

Starting school is exciting but can also be a bit scary. Some children are shy and anxious in new situations, and find it hard to be apart from you.

- Talk positively about going to school, making new friends and doing exciting new things like learning new songs, painting and playing outside.
- Encourage your child to talk about how she's feeling before, on, and after the first few days.
- Try a practice run. Visit the school so your child knows where she's going and what to expect.
- When you arrive at school, stay for a short time with your child.
  - When it's time to go, tell her that you're going and when you will be back.
  - Always be back when you said you would.

2. Enough sleep

Your child needs a good night's sleep for his brain to be ready to learn (about 10 to 12 hours).

- Set up a nice, relaxing bedtime routine – a drink, bath, brush teeth, cuddle, story, kiss and 'goodnight'.
- Just before bed is not a good time for tickles, TV or other excitement.
- Set a regular time for bed.

3. Enjoy books together

Read lots and lots of books!

- Have a special time each day to read stories together – sit comfortably so your child can see the book and your face, and you can see hers.
- Show her how to open the book, point to the title, the letters, words and pictures so she knows what they mean.
- Read nursery rhymes and favourite stories again and again.
- Get your child involved by asking questions. 'What do you think will happen next?'

4. Making friends and pretend play

At school, children learn to make friends, share and take turns.

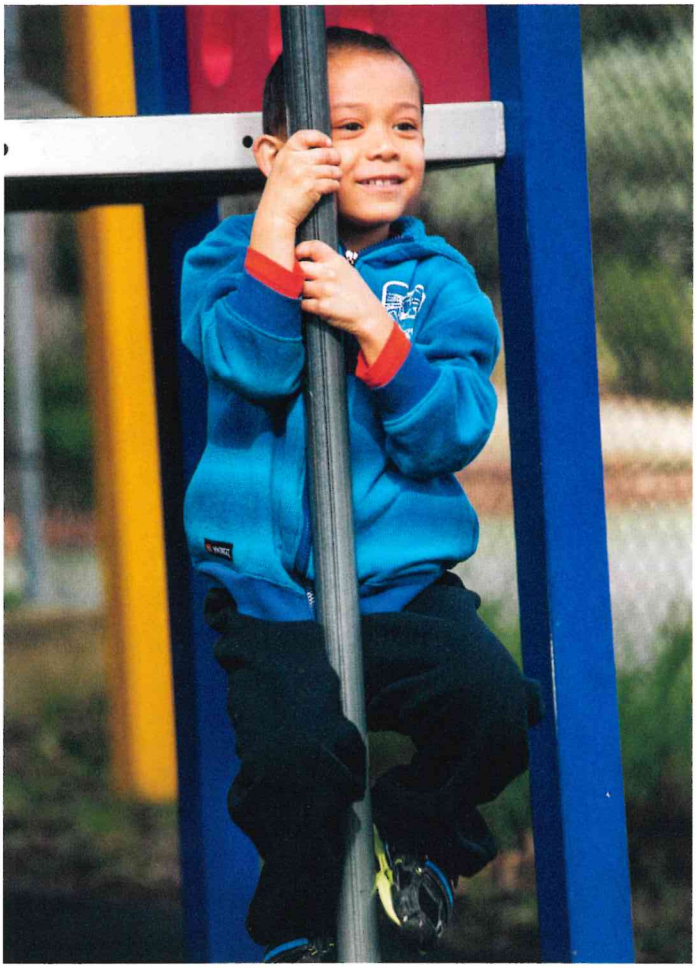
- Find ways for your child to meet children outside your family.
- Have other children over to play, particularly those who will be in your child's class.
- Pretend play, such as tea parties, going to the shops and superheroes, are a big part of school. Let your child use his imagination. A shoe box can be a toy car or a doll's bed!

5. Playgrounds and parks

Having fun at the park provides lots of chances to enjoy the swings, slide and other equipment.

Physical activity like this:

- makes your child's muscles stronger and prepares her for outdoor play at school. Always supervise children when they're playing.
- uses a part of the brain that helps kids concentrate, so physical activity is great before a sit down activity like reading a book.



6. Speaking and listening

Listening and understanding

This includes following instructions, and being aware of what other people are saying.

If your child finds this tricky, try:

- waiting – give him time to answer or do the task
- repeating what was said or breaking it down into smaller parts
- using fewer or simpler words, and explaining what new words mean
- giving clues like, 'You cut with the…'
- giving choices like, 'Do we use a cup for drinking or eating?'



Sharing thoughts and ideas

Commenting, negotiating, asking for things and greeting people are all important skills at school.

If your child finds this tricky, try:

- encouraging her to make comments like 'Dad's swimming'
- repeating a word correctly if she made a mistake
- asking her to show you what she needs if she can't say it in words
- giving lots of praise for trying.

7. Classroom crafts

Make sure your child gets lots of practice using things like scissors, pencils and paint so he'll feel confident using them at school.

Scissors

Practise cutting on a line – show your child how to hold scissors properly.

- Thumb in top hole of scissors and other thumb on top of the paper he's cutting.
- Turn the paper and move hands when cutting around a corner.

Drawing

At school, children do lots of drawing, so practise by drawing simple shapes like lines and circles. This is the first step before learning how to write.

- Try drawing in sand or with chalk.
- Show your child how to do it, then get her to copy you.

Pencil grasp

Holding a pencil or crayon properly means:

- holding it near the tip – use a sticker or dot to show him where to put his fingers
- using three or four fingers. If he's holding with a fist, gently correct his hold.

8. Getting dressed

It's easier at school if your child can dress and undress herself.

- Help your child to choose clothes she can manage on her own.
- Practise dressing. Help her start off, then let her complete the rest, gradually letting her do more until she can do it all by herself.
- Practise with dress-up and dolls.
- Choose suitable clothes for school – she might play outside or do painting.

9. Healthy eating

Healthy lunches and snacks help with concentration and learning.

- Try a practice picnic. Check your child can open containers and manage his food.
- Involve your child in choosing and packing his own lunch.
- Include lots of vegetables, fresh fruit, cheese, yoghurt, lean meat, wholemeal bread, and a bottle of water. Pack just the right amount – not too much.
- Start the day with a healthy breakfast!

10. Going to the toilet

To help your child manage going to the toilet at school, give her lots of practice to undo, pull down and do up her clothes, flush the toilet and wash her hands, all by herself.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

Consumer Approved

This publication is provided for general education and information purposes. Contact a qualified healthcare professional for any medical advice needed.

© State of Western Australia
Child and Adolescent Health Service – Community Health
2018/2021 CAH-011797

HealthyWA
healthywa.wa.gov.au

When your child starts school, it's a big step for you too!

Try to relax and enjoy this time with your child. If you feel calm and show you are happy about your child starting school, she'll feel happier too.

If you are worried about your child going to school, talk to your:

- child health nurse
- school health nurse
- school teacher
- local Child Development Centre – see healthywa.wa.gov.au

For more health information:

- healthywa.wa.gov.au
- raisingchildren.net.au

We've used 'he' and 'she' in turn – please change to suit your child.

