



FIRST YEARS: PHYSICAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

From Hui Xin nurse February 21st, 2017.

Dear parents,

For some of you, this is your first child's first time to enter Kindergarten and by being first time parents, you will experience doubt and insecurities towards the challenges to come. You will ask yourself questions like, *why does my child get sick more times after joining kindergarten?* and *why does my child prefer to stay at home?* *Why does my child fight over toys?* The answer is, your child is growing and facing both physical and emotional milestones, which might be worrisome in the moment, but actually helps them grow, build resilience and become emotionally aware independent people. All people, as well as children face changes with a degree of doubt and unease, now children have to learn to cope with 2 worlds; a new "social group/behavioral challenge" in kindergarten and an "emotional safe zone" at home. As a parent, you are encouraged to understand that children should exhibit a full range of emotions, happy, sad, proud and angry. Childhood is very much working towards understanding these feelings and it is helpful if we do not keep unrealistic or non beneficial ideals, such as "tears are bad" or "always be happy". No child can be fully happy or responsible, unless they are allowed to exhibit and learn to control their full range of emotions.

In children's development there is an understanding of "inherent trust" or lack thereof. A child who has grown up in a confident, emotionally balanced and nurturing home, will exhibit inherent trust in other people by rule of associated comparison, "my father, mother and grandparents trust the world, so will I" sort of thing, this applies to most children. However, a child who experiences sustained insecurities of separation from their family might have a lack of inherent trust and exhibit exaggerated caution and emotional distress regarding kindergarten. In relation it might equally be an emotional time for parents and grandparents, realizing this is the first step in their child's separation from home, which can be overwhelming and brings up the "*what if*" and "*what about the future*" doubts.

We sincerely ask parents to put on their bravest face, prepare for the emotional challenges the first weeks of kindergarten and show confidence; "*I CAN do this, my child CAN do this*".

Emotionally; Be confident, strong and understanding.

Before you know it, your child does not want to go home from kindergarten in the afternoon and has to be convinced to go. This of course, opens feelings of both joy and at the same time inadequacy in parents/grandparents. But do not worry, children are captured in the moment and in the play. You are advised to simply say with confidence "*All children, even parents and teachers need to go home to prepare dinner and rest, in order to have another day of fun tomorrow. After two minutes we say goodbye and see you tomorrow*".



Physically, even though your child has never had a cough or a cold, when starting pre-school, he/she will get sick more often. It is an unfortunate certainty of kindergarten and later school life, where children spend most of their time together in a group. However, it is also a reality of growing up and is a prerequisite in developing the proper immune defense system. In the future, we do not get to choose whether or not we want to be around new people, so choosing to keep a child at home for longer periods than necessary at this age is putting them behind their physical development and will extend the period of development of the upper and lower respiratory system.

An average 2-4 year old will catch a cold/the flu up to 8 times per year in their first 2 years, after that it should go down to 4-6 episodes per year. For children who start pre-school before the age of 2, there will be a higher risk. The first few months of kindergarten are the roughest because children have not been exposed to considerable amounts of germs before. Lack of exposure maintains an immature immune system. Studies have shown that children of mothers who breastfed have a higher developed immune system than children fed formula milk. Also, children with allergies such as rhinitis or asthma will be more susceptible to getting sick. Even though your child will get sick more frequently, most of the time it is a minor virus or URI (upper respiratory infection) to the nose, ears and throat. Often it's just a runny nose or low-grade temperature. Give your child plenty of fluids, a good rest and use prescribed fever reducing medicine. Children running a fever above 38.5 degrees should see a doctor. In cases of a contagious illness, you must inform the class-teacher directly at 8:00 in the morning for standard notification and quarantine procedures. Further, your child must be cleared by a physician and show clearance letter before returning to school (you can email the letter to me at nurse-hxj@internewton.com, call ext. 8102 or see me in person at arrival times 8:00 - 9:00).

The time of year, where schools experience most absence due to illness is during the winter months. *Most believe that children get sick due to cold weather and changes in weather, which is only a partial truth* when applied to schools and kindergartens. The main reason why more children get sick in the cold/wet periods are because children spend more time inside, in a group, more exposed to the germs of the group when unable to go outside for fresh air. At Hui Xin campus we use PM2.5 and VOC air-purifiers in the class-rooms which can circulate, clean and exchange all the air inside a class-room 4 times per hour. We also have a policy of being outside as much as possible; Raincoats and rain boots are part of the uniform standard and will be used to teach children awareness of the elements, how to dress properly and to let them have the freshest and cleanest air, which for Suzhou, often happens on days with rain as the PM2.5 particles drop dramatically. If you wish to dress your child in more layers during the cold months, please buy thermal underwear for your child to wear underneath the Newton uniform, not outside.

Additionally, be informed that the school's menu is diverse and aims to represent both popular Western and Asian foods equally with daily choices of fruit, juice, warm/cold drinks and salads. For children's development the menu is rich in protein, grains, fruits/vegetables and dairy. Fresh and solid foods help against allergies, but we kindly remind parents to inform teachers of any identified allergens such as lactose and fructose intolerance which can cause digestive problems.

Physically; Be observant, preventive and share info.

Sincerely,

Anna Hu, Head nurse & nutritionist
and the Hui Xin team!