

For immediate release

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Alberta Blue Cross® and APPLE Schools provide wellness tips for return to school this winter

Returning to school after the holidays, with shorter days and chilly weather, can feel challenging and stressful for children. To help families navigate the winter season, Alberta Blue Cross and APPLE Schools are reminding parents to prioritize their children’s mental health—as well as be conscious of their own mental health needs.

“As a parent of 3 children, I see firsthand the challenges and pressures that kids face and know the importance of taking time to check in with them regularly on their mental health,” says Brian Geislinger, senior vice-president of Corporate Relations and Community Engagement with Alberta Blue Cross. “Open, honest conversations not only let our kids know we’re there for them but can help them cope with challenges they may be facing that we’re not even aware of.”

“Children in Canada are facing a growing health crisis, with increasing challenges in physical activity, nutrition and mental wellbeing,” says Jenn Flynn, executive director of APPLE Schools. “At APPLE Schools, we reverse these trends by empowering students to make healthy choices that improve their lives today and safeguard their future. They take control of their wellbeing, building a foundation for a healthier tomorrow and breaking free from the health challenges that threaten their generation.”

APPLE Schools and Alberta Blue Cross offer the following advice to help students kick off the winter semester in the best possible way:

- Make sleep a priority. Establish consistent bedtime and morning routines so that sleep schedules and wake-up times are in line with the school timetable, and do something relaxing before bedtime (try to avoid electronics).
- Wind down from the day as a family by playing a board game, reading a book together or watching a favourite show.
- Get outside. Whether it’s one-on-one with your child or as a family, explore your neighbourhood’s outdoor spaces. Discover what your community has to offer—even during the winter months.
- Families lead busy lives, and meals on the go are often part of the routine. Finding simple ways to make healthy food choices at school and home can make a big difference.
- Take time for yourself. Breathing, meditation and yoga are all important mindfulness activities for both children and parents.
- World news can cause stress. Talk with children about what they see and hear so that you can help them understand what’s going on.
- Tension is contagious. Set a good example when it comes to managing your own stress.
- Remember, some level of stress is inevitable in every child’s life. Teaching healthy coping skills today will help kids weather life’s ups and downs as they get older.

Alberta Blue Cross is a proud sponsor of APPLE Schools, a project that improves the lives of more than 35,000 children in more than 100 underserved schools across Canada. With 90 of these schools located in Alberta, the initiative has a profound impact on the health and wellbeing of children and youth. Children in APPLE school communities engage in activities designed to make healthy living fun and engaging, such as taste tests to try new and healthy foods, wellness challenges that inspire new goals, movement and mental health breaks that energize classrooms, and special events that promote active living and wellness. Students in these schools demonstrate a 35 per cent increase in physical activity, a 40 per cent decrease in the chance of obesity, a 10 per cent increase in consumption of fruits and vegetables, fewer mental health visits to the doctor during adolescence, and improvements in quality of life, leadership abilities, productivity and learning outcomes.

Read more at www.appleschools.ca and community.ab.bluecross.ca/partnerships/community/apple-schools.php.

About Alberta Blue Cross

As the largest provider of health benefits in Alberta, we believe we have the potential and responsibility to impact people's lives for the better. We believe all communities should thrive, and we are committed to serving as a champion for wellness by promoting the health of Albertans.

About Apple Schools

Apple Schools is an innovative school-focused health promotion initiative. It impacts live of more than 35,000 students annually in more than 100 schools across schools across Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario by improving their lifelong eating, physical activity and mental health habits.

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