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Back to School Health Tips from Local HSHS Hospitals

(BREESSE, GREENVILLE, HIGHLAND, IL) – As the remaining days of summer end and a new school year begins, HSHS St. Joseph's Hospitals in Breese and Highland, and HSHS Holy Family in Greenville reminds parents that it is time to prepare their child for the new school year ahead.

The following back to school health tips is recommended to ensure a safe and healthy school year:

- **Make sure your child is up-to-date on all vaccinations.** Review your child's shot records and make sure that he/she is up-to-date on all shots before heading back to school. Preteens and teens require the Tdap vaccine to protect against tetanus, diphtheria and whooping cough – among other immunizations. All children going back to primary, secondary or college, should be vaccinated accordingly to protect from infectious diseases such as meningitis. And, don't forget to schedule a flu shot later in the year for children.
- **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.
- **Handwashing.** Before your child goes back to school make sure he/she understands the importance of proper handwashing. Soap and water can do wonders in reducing your

child's risk of illness while at school. A child should wash his/her hands properly before eating and after using the restroom.

- **Backpack safety.** Choose a backpack with wide shoulder straps and make sure your child uses both straps evenly across the back. St. Joseph's Hospital Breese and Highland physical therapist Aryn Weis reminds parents that having all the weight over one shoulder can lead to muscle strain. Children should always have straps over both shoulders. She also advises to pack the bags lightly. A backpack should never weigh more than 10 to 20 percent of a child's body weight.
- **Eat a healthy lunch.** 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.
- **Get plenty of sleep.** Make sure your child is getting an adequate amount of sleep at night to help aid in their overall health.

For more information on back to school health please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/family/kids/>.

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.hospitalsisters.org.