



# Parent Tips

## Going back to school

Before returning to school, it's a good idea to meet with the school administration, your child's teachers and the school nurse. Explain your child's diagnosis and treatment plan in detail. Ask your child life specialist to come with you if possible. Some things to be sure to cover are:

Tell them if your child has a Port-a-cath or Broviac. Leave instructions to call you if your child has a fever of 100.4 or above and to inform you if anyone in school has contracted an infectious disease such as chicken pox, mono or the flu.

There will be unexpected absences – ask about who will pick up and return schoolwork when your child is absent from school. What are the policies regarding your child completing assignments on time? Ask how the school district arranges for tutors.

Don't be afraid to ask for accommodations for your child's needs including but not limited to, permission or a special pass to go to the nurse or restroom when necessary, or to wear a hat or a scarf to school.

*“There is a woman at our hospital who arranged a meeting with my son's school, to explain to his teachers/principal/classmates about what he was going through and showed them a video. He still has kids ask if his cancer is gone (he was diagnosed 2 years ago with Leukemia). He tells them he still has it, but it makes him feel uncomfortable. The school arranged a dinner/talent show to benefit him - which was absolutely wonderful. But - there were pictures of him on the walls and everyone said “hello” to Brandon (on video tape) to send to the hospital. He still feels embarrassed about this. The whole school knows he has Leukemia. He was in 2nd grade at the time and is now in 4th. I think he's pretty much treated like a normal kid, though. He never says anything about kids teasing him - if they did, I'd go through the roof! I think that most other kids realize that it's not a laughing matter. The school has been great - lots of support. We've thought about moving, but no way would we change schools in the middle of treatment. No extra stress! My son was home schooled by a teacher*

at his school for the rest of the year after he was diagnosed, which was only 2 1/2 months.”

“My son was diagnosed with ALL on December 1st during the fourth grade. He did not return to school until the fifth grade. In our school district the children go to a new school in fifth grade so re-entry to school meant a new school. I tried to organize my concerns and requests and made an effort to make those requests and concerns clear to both the principal and his teacher. I drafted a lengthy letter explaining his illness, treatment, strengths, weaknesses as well as the things I wanted the school to do. I tried to take on as much responsibility for those requests as possible. I found that by making my concerns clear and trying to assist the school in doing the things I wanted, I was met with great cooperation and my son’s re-entry went smoothly.”

“When my son returned to school after missing almost a full year, all of his classmates just stared at him. At first no one came to say hello, and it seemed that everyone was keeping their distance. Finally, one friend came over and said “Welcome Back!” That’s all it took. The ice was broken and everyone acted much more normally. After witnessing a re-entry that was almost a disaster, I would recommend finding someone in the class to say those words, to express joy at seeing the child again. If you don’t know the right child to do it, call the teacher and ask him/her to recommend someone. It will make a big difference for everyone.”

“We were worried about the impact of all the sets of germs our child would be exposed to upon returning to school. Consequently, we asked the teacher to have the children wash their hands several times during the day. It turned out that this took too long, was too disruptive and would sometimes be forgotten so we purchased instant hand sanitizer (soap that doesn’t require water) for each of the tables in the classroom. It cost us about \$15 dollars a month but was well worth it.”

“We had some difficulty with getting clear information regarding homework assignments. If your child is out of school for an extended period of time, you need a contact person you can count on to give accurate information about which assignments are due and how to do them. My son had wonderful teachers but none of them gave him any leeway when it came to grades.”