

Things You Should Know: Your Child 4-5 Years

DIET

- It is often a challenge to get your child to eat nutritious food from all five food groups. The best thing you can do is to keep healthy food in the house and offer it for meals and snacks. Limit the amount of fatty foods, salt, sugar and soda you have in the house. If the junk food isn't around, they won't eat it.
- **Offer small portions**, with second helpings if the child wants more food.
- **Eat meals together as a family at the kitchen table.** Create a pleasant atmosphere at mealtime. Give your child opportunities to join in the conversation. Talk about things your child is interested in.
- **Offer your child 3-4 servings of 1% or skim milk daily. Avoid all sweet drinks including soda, Kool-Aid, sports drinks and sweet tea. Limit juice to 4-6 ounces per day.**
- **Offer 5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily.**

SLEEP

- Encourage your child to sleep in his or her own bed.
- **A bedtime routine is very important and can help provide structure for your child. Create a calm bedtime routine that includes reading or telling stories.**
- It is very important for children in school to have a set bedtime.
- Some children need more rest than others and may still need an occasional nap. **Ten to thirteen hours of sleep per day is recommended.**
- Nightmares are common at this age. If this happens, comfort your child in bed and give reassurance that all is well, but don't fall in the habit of having your presence required for him or her to fall asleep.

DISCIPLINE

- **Discipline is very important. Every child needs structure and limit setting.** In fact, many children act out or misbehave to explore what their limits are. By setting limits you teach the child appropriate behaviors and show that you love and care. Physical punishment, like spanking, may be effective, but it often gives the child a message that physical violence and hitting are okay. Time out and taking away toys or privileges are very effective in this age group. Time out should be one minute per year of age. Use this as a teaching tool. Ask the child if he or she understands why the behavior is inappropriate and then forget it after time out is over. Positive reinforcement and consistency are the keys.

SAFETY

- **Your child should switch from a 5-point harness car seat to a booster seat when he or she has outgrown the weight or height limit of the car seat. A seat belt alone is not safe for children this age. Children should sit in the back seat.** See our Car Seat Guidelines handout for further details. Don't leave the driveway until all are buckled up, including you. Be firm about this. Set a good example.
- **Children should be taught bicycle safety and should wear a helmet every time they ride.** Even a minor accident can cause a head injury.

- Discourage skateboarding and roller skating unless proper protective equipment is used, including a helmet and elbow, wrist and knee pads.
- Guns should be locked up and ammunition stored separately. Children should never be allowed to handle guns without adult supervision.
- Children this age are very curious about fire. Keep all matches, lighters, candles and cigarettes away from your child. There should be smoke detectors outside every bedroom. Check the batteries frequently. Practice a fire escape plan with your child. Buy a fire extinguisher.
- Carbon monoxide detectors are recommended in every home.
- Preschool children need close supervision in the home and neighborhood.
- **To avoid sunburn, limit your child's exposure to the sun and use sunscreen. Purchase a sunscreen that is "broad spectrum" with at least an SPF of 15. Apply the sunscreen 15-30 minutes before going outside.**
- Children should be constantly supervised by an adult around water. Life jackets are critical when boating and swimming in lakes or streams.
- Poisoning is still a concern. Keep the Poison Control Center number readily available. **1-800-366-8888.**
- Falls are still common. Consider window guards.
- Children should not play near hot grease or hot water in the kitchen.
- Strangers should be discussed at length with your child. Teach your child not to talk to or accept food from strangers. If your child goes with a stranger, chances are high that your child will not return.
- **Talk about safe touch with your child.** Remind your child that no one should touch any part of the body that is covered by a bathing suit. Teach your child to tell you if he or she is touched in a way that is unpleasant.
- Teach your child the appropriate use of 911.
- Make sure your child knows his or her name, address, phone number and your name.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

- Bedwetting is common in children up to age 5 or 6 years. Daytime wetting accidents are not as common and may be a sign of urinary tract infection. There are a few things you can do to help prevent nighttime accidents. First, limit the fluids your child drinks in the evening (nothing to drink after supper except sips of water). Second, take your child to the bathroom before going to bed and, if you like, wake your child to go to the bathroom before you go to bed. Do not punish a child for wetting accidents. You may include your child in cleaning the soiled laundry, but do not be negative with your child. Children will grow out of this.
- **Schedule an appointment with a dentist. Your child needs to see the dentist every six months. Help your child brush twice a day with a small amount of fluoride toothpaste.**
- Your child's attention span should be increasing. He or she should be able to sit still and quiet for longer periods of time. This is important for starting school. Your child needs to be able to act appropriately with other children.
- **Encourage regular exercise, either through sports or playing outside daily.**

PARENTING PRACTICES

- **Parents need to spend time playing with their children every day.**
- Provide opportunities for physical exercise. Try family exercise such as walking, swimming or bicycling (with helmet).
- **Screen time (TV, computer use and video games) should be monitored and limited to no more than 2 hours per day.**
- Encourage your child's independence and help him practice making good choices.
- Provide opportunities for your child to play with other children.
- Provide experiences outside your home to help your child explore and develop social skills such as sharing and taking turns.
- Show affection and pride in each child's special strengths and achievements. Be generous with your praise.
- It is important to show affection for your child.
- Never threaten to leave or abandon your child.
- Show interest in your child's activities.
- Encourage your child to spend time with grandparents and other adults.
- Read together as a family.
- **A drug-free, alcohol-free, tobacco-free and vape-free environment is essential for your child.**
- Children this age may be curious about where babies come from and about differences between boys and girls. Be ready to answer their questions honestly at a level appropriate to your child's understanding. Children are very honest about their need to know. They will ask questions until their curiosity is satisfied. Understand that your child's sexual curiosity is normal.

IMMUNIZATIONS AND WELL CHILD VISITS

- At the 4 and 5 year visits your child will have lead and anemia screening.
- The nurses and doctors will check your child's shot record at the beginning of each visit and will be able to identify if any shots are needed. At this age, your child may be given DTaP, MMR, IPV and chickenpox vaccines.
- Your child continues to need yearly well child exams.
- Yearly Flu and COVID-19 vaccines are recommended.

Please call or text the office with any questions or concerns!