

# Health and Wellness: 3 Years

## Development

In the next year, your child may be able to:

- wash his or her hands with soap and water and dry them with a towel
- draw a person with at least three parts
- unbutton one button
- correctly answer, "What do you do when you're hungry?"
- hop on one foot
- catch a large ball with both hands
- correctly identify five colors when shown examples.

In the next year, all of his or her speech should be understandable.

## Feeding Tips

- Teach your child to wash his or her hands and face often. This is especially important before eating and drinking.
- Your child's food likes and dislikes may change. Do not make mealtimes a battle. Give your child a good example with your own food choices.
- Continue to offer a variety of healthful foods, even those that your child was not previously interested in eating.
- Your child should decide how much he or she eats. Let him or her feed himself or herself.

- To see if your child has a healthful diet, look at a 4 or 5 day span to see if he or she is eating a good balance of foods from the food groups.
- Limit sweets and fast foods.
- Do not offer food as rewards.
- Your child should only be drinking milk or water. Other beverages, including juice, are not recommended.
- Give your child foods that are small enough or soft enough to prevent choking. High-risk foods include grapes, hot dogs and string cheese. Cut these foods lengthwise. Do not give your child whole nuts or popcorn.
- Milk is an excellent source of calcium and vitamin D.
- Your child should only eat when sitting at the table.

## Toilet Training

- For most children, interest in toilet training happens between the ages of 2 and 3.
- Your child should be ready for toilet training if he or she has not done so yet.
- Do not make your child use the toilet or get upset if he or she has an accident. Always remain calm and give your child lots of encouragement and praise.
- Avoid toilet training if your family is under stress, such as planning a move or welcoming a baby.
- Start using proper body part words such as penis, anus, vagina and vulva.

**(over)**

## Physical Activity

- Your child needs space to run, play and be active throughout the day. Take your child outdoors as much as possible, even in the wintertime.
- Play is important for physical and emotional development.
- Choose activities your child enjoys: dancing, running, walking, swimming, skating, etc.
- Watch your child during any physical activity. Or better yet, join in!

## Sleep

- Your child needs between 10 to 13 hours of sleep each night.
- Most children should still be taking at least one nap each day. If your child does not sleep, he or she should still have a quiet resting time in the afternoon with no screen time.
- Your child may have night fears. Using a night light or opening the bedroom door may help calm fears.
- Nightmares are common and normal at this age. Provide comfort and reassurance.
- Continue your calming bedtime routine. This can include giving a bath, reading books or singing songs. A consistent bedtime is best.

## Safety

- **Never shake or hit your child.**
  - If you are losing control, take a few deep breaths, put your child in a safe place and go into another room for a few minutes. If possible, have someone else watch your child so you can take a break. Call a friend, your local Crisis Nursery or United Way at 651-291-0211 or dial 211.

- Use an approved car seat for the height and weight of your child every time he or she rides in a vehicle.
  - Your child must be in a car seat in the back seat. Your child should continue to be rear-facing until he or she passes the height and weight limits for his or her convertible (toddler) car seat.
  - Car seat straps should fit snugly against your child. Do not use bulky jackets or snowsuits under car seat straps.
  - It's very important to always read their car seat and vehicle owners' manuals for proper installation.
  - For full details about state your state laws please visit [Child Passenger Safety - Child Passenger Safety \(mn.gov\)](#) or [Wisconsin Department of Transportation Child safety seat laws \(wisconsin.gov\)](#).
- Do not talk or text on your cellphone while driving.
- Always put a helmet on your child if he or she rides in a bicycle carrier or behind you on a bike.
- Always watch your child when playing outside. Keep him or her away from streets and hold hands in parking lots.
- Do not allow your child to play around dogs or other animals unsupervised.
- When your child is outside, use sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15. Use a brand with the active ingredients titanium dioxide or zinc oxide. Avoid any that contain oxybenzone.
- Keep all medicines, cleaning supplies and poisons locked and out of your child's reach.
- Call the poison control center or your health provider for instructions in case your child swallows poison. Have these numbers handy by your phone or program them into your phone.
- Create a safe area for your child to play. Use safety catches on drawers and cupboards. Cover electrical outlets with plastic covers.

- Falls are common at this age. Put gates on all stairways and doors to dangerous areas.
- Watch your child when he or she uses stairs.
- Make sure all dressers, bookshelves and televisions are attached to the wall. Children at this age like to climb on furniture. Unsecured furniture can tip and fall on children and cause severe injury or death.
- Do not leave your child alone in the car or the house, even for a moment.
- The number one cause of death for children ages 1 to 4 is drowning. “Knowing how to swim” does not make him or her safe in the water, including in a bathtub. Your child needs constant supervision when playing in or near any open water, even when he or she is not swimming. Your child should wear a life jacket when near a lake, river, ocean, or on a boat.
- Never put hot liquids near table or countertop edges. Keep your child away from a hot stove, oven and furnace.
- Talk to your child about not talking to or following strangers. Also, talk about “good touch” and “bad touch.”
- Keep all knives, guns or other weapons out of your child’s reach. Lock and store guns and ammunition in separate locations.
- Do not let anyone smoke or vape in your house or car at any time.

## What To Know About Screen Time

- Screen time includes watching television and using devices such as cellphones, video games, computers and other electronics.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting your child to 1 hour or less of high-quality programs each day. Watch these programs with your child to help him or her better understand them.
- Keep bedrooms and mealtimes screen-free.

## What Your Child Needs

- Your child may throw temper tantrums. Make sure he or she is safe and ignore the tantrums. If you give in, your child will throw more tantrums.
- Your child can understand the consequences of unacceptable behavior. Follow through with the consequences you talk about. This will help your child gain self-control.
- Read to your child each day. Set aside a few quiet minutes every day for sharing books together. This time should be free of television, texting and other distractions.
- Offer your child choices such as choosing clothes, stories or breakfast foods. This will encourage decision-making and independence.
- If you do not use daycare, consider enrolling your child in preschool, a playgroup, or joining Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) through your local school district. Learning to get along with others is an important skill at this age.
- Early Childhood Screening is a check of how your child is growing, developing and learning. Screening at 3 is preferred, but your child may be screened between the ages of 3 and the start of kindergarten as required by law.

## Dental Care

- Make regular dental appointments for cleanings and checkups starting at age 3 years or earlier if there are questions or concerns. Your child may need fluoride supplements if you have well water.
- Brush your child’s teeth with a soft-bristled toothbrush when he or she wakes up and before he or she goes to bed. You should use a small amount (size of a grain of rice) of toothpaste with fluoride. Let your child play with the toothbrush after brushing.

## Community and Health Information Resources

- **Healthy Children**
  - [healthychildren.org](https://healthychildren.org)
- **Poison Control**
  - 1-800-222-1222 or [poison.org](https://poison.org)
- **Common Sense Media**
  - [commonsensemedia.org](https://commonsensemedia.org)
- **Health Powered Kids**
  - [healthpoweredkids.org](https://healthpoweredkids.org)

### Minnesota

- **MinnesotaHelp.info®**
  - [mnhelp.info](https://mnhelp.info)
- **United Way**
  - [211unitedway.org](https://211unitedway.org)
  - dial 211 or 651-291-0211
- **Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Program**
  - [health.state.mn.us/wic](https://health.state.mn.us/wic)
- **Early Childhood Family Education**
  - [education.mn.gov/MDE/fam/elsprog/ECFE](https://education.mn.gov/MDE/fam/elsprog/ECFE)
- **Parent Aware**
  - [parentaware.org](https://parentaware.org)
- **Help Me Grow**
  - [helpmegrowmn.org](https://helpmegrowmn.org)
- **Head Start**
  - [mnheadstart.org](https://mnheadstart.org)

### Wisconsin

- **211 Wisconsin**
  - [211wisconsin.communityos.org](https://211wisconsin.communityos.org)
  - dial 211 or 1-877-947-2211
- **Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Program**
  - [dhs.wisconsin.gov/wic](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/wic)

- **Early Childhood Family Education**
  - [dpi.wi.gov/early-childhood](https://dpi.wi.gov/early-childhood)
- **Child Aware of America (Wisconsin)**
  - [childcareaware.org/state/wisconsin](https://childcareaware.org/state/wisconsin)
- **Birth to 3 Program**
  - [dhs.wisconsin.gov/birthto3](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/birthto3)
- **Head Start**
  - [whsaonline.org](https://whsaonline.org)

## Your Child's Next Well Checkup

- Your child's next well checkup will be at age 4.
- Your child may need these vaccinations:
  - ☐ DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis)
  - ☐ IPV (inactivated poliovirus vaccine)
  - ☐ MMR (measles, mumps, rubella)
  - ☐ VAR (varicella)
  - ☐ influenza.

Information about the Vaccines For Children (VFC) program is available if your child is eligible for the program. VFC is a federally funded program that offers vaccines at no cost.

Talk with your health care provider about giving acetaminophen (Tylenol®) after your child's immunizations.