

# Health and Wellness: 4 Years

## Development

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

- use a toilet independently
- take turns and share with others most of the time
- copy a plus (+) sign
- copy his or her first name
- use past tense
- use 4- or 5-word sentences
- count to 10
- balance on one foot for 5 seconds
- walk on his or her tiptoes.

## Feeding Tips

- Teach your child to wash his or her hands and face often. This is especially important before eating and drinking.
- Offer your child fresh fruit and vegetables. Avoid processed foods as much as possible.
- 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.
- Let your child help plan and make simple meals. He or she can set and clean up the table, pour cereal or make sandwiches. Always supervise any kitchen activity.

- Try to eat meals together as a family. Enjoy each other's company and encourage a pleasant experience.
- 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.

## 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!

**(over)**

## Sleep

- Your child needs between 10 to 13 hours of sleep each night.
- 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 or booster seat for the height and weight of your child every time he or she rides in a vehicle.
  - Your child should transition to a belt-positioning booster seat when his or her height and weight is above the forward-facing car seat limit. Check the safety label of the car seat.
  - Be sure all other adults and children are buckled as well.
- Do not talk or text on your cellphone while driving.
- Practice parking lot and street safety. Teach your child why it is important to stay out of traffic.
- Do not allow your child to play around dogs or other animals unsupervised.
- Make sure your child always wears a helmet when riding a tricycle, bicycle or scooter, or when skating or sledding.
- 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.
- 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.
- Warn your child never to go with or accept anything from a stranger. Teach your child to say "no" if he or she is uncomfortable. 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

- 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.
- A structured preschool program can help with preparing your child for kindergarten.
- 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.
- Discipline starts with a positive, loving relationship with your child.
- Your child wants your attention, so praise him or her whenever you witness good behaviors. This will encourage continued good behavior.
- Rules and boundaries are important for your child's physical safety and emotional security.
- Consistent follow through of discipline will teach your child that there are consequences for his or her actions.
- Do not use physical punishment. It encourages aggressive behavior and becomes ineffective over time.
- Appropriate types of discipline can include giving time outs (1 minute for each year old), taking away privileges and experiencing consequences.

- Focus on the negative behavior instead of speaking negatively about your child such as saying he or she is naughty or bad.

## Dental Care

- Make regular dental appointments for cleanings and checkups. 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. An adult should help your child with brushing teeth.

## Community and Health Information Resources

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

## Minnesota

- **MinnesotaHelp.info**<sup>®</sup>  
— [mnhelp.info](http://mnhelp.info)
- **United Way**  
— [211unitedway.org](http://211unitedway.org)  
— dial 211 or 651-291-0211
- **Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Program**  
— [health.state.mn.us/wic](http://health.state.mn.us/wic)
- **Early Childhood Family Education**  
— [education.mn.gov/MDE/fam/elsprog/ECFE](http://education.mn.gov/MDE/fam/elsprog/ECFE)
- **Parent Aware**  
— [parentaware.org](http://parentaware.org)

- **Help Me Grow**
  - [helpmegrowmn.org](http://helpmegrowmn.org)
- **Head Start**
  - [mnheadstart.org](http://mnheadstart.org)

## **Wisconsin**

- **211 Wisconsin**
  - [211wisconsin.communityos.org](http://211wisconsin.communityos.org)
  - dial 211 or 1-877-947-2211
- **Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Program**
  - [dhs.wisconsin.gov/wic](http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/wic)
- **Early Childhood Family Education**
  - [dpi.wi.gov/early-childhood](http://dpi.wi.gov/early-childhood)
- **Child Aware of America (Wisconsin)**
  - [childcareaware.org/state/wisconsin](http://childcareaware.org/state/wisconsin)
- **Head Start**
  - [whsaonline.org](http://whsaonline.org)

## **Your Child's Next Well Checkup**

- Your child's next well checkup will be at age 5.
- Your child may need these vaccinations:
  - DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis)
  - IPV (inactivated poliovirus vaccine)
  - 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.