

Health and Wellness: 4 Years

Development

- Your child will become more independent and begin to focus on adults and children outside of the family.
- Your child should be able to:
 - ride a tricycle and hop
 - use safety scissors
 - show awareness of gender identity
 - help get dressed and undressed
 - play with other children and sing
 - retell part of a story and count from 1 to 10
 - identify different colors
 - help with simple household chores.
- Read to your child every day for at least 15 minutes. This time should be free of television, texting and other distractions.

Reading helps your child get ready to talk, improves your child's word skills and teaches him or her to listen and learn. The amount of language your child is exposed to in early years has a lot to do with how he or she will develop and succeed.

- Read a lot of different stories, poetry and rhyming books. Ask your child what he or she thinks will happen in the book. Help your child use correct words and phrases.
- Teach your child the meanings of new words. Your child is growing in language use.

- Your child may be eager to write and may show an interest in learning to read. Teach your child how to print his or her name and play games with the alphabet.
- Help your child follow directions by using short, clear sentences.
- 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.
- Encourage writing and drawing. Help your child learn letters and numbers.
- Let your child play with other children to promote sharing and cooperation.

Feeding Tips

- Avoid junk foods and unhealthful snacks and soft drinks.
- Encourage good eating habits. Lead by example! Offer a variety of foods. Ask your child to at least try a new food.
- Offer your child healthful snacks. Avoid foods high in sugar or fat. Cut up raw vegetables, fruits, cheese and other foods that could cause choking hazards.
- 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.
- Make mealtime a pleasant time.
- Restrict pop to rare occasions. Limit juice to 4 to 6 ounces a day.

(over)

- Your child needs at least 1,000 mg of calcium and 600 IU of vitamin D each day.
- Milk is an excellent source of calcium and vitamin D.

Physical Activity

- Your child needs at least 60 minutes of active playtime most days of the week.
- Physical activity helps build strong bones and muscles, lowers your child's risk of certain diseases (such as diabetes), increases flexibility, and increases self-esteem.
- Choose activities your child enjoys: dance, running, walking, swimming, skating, etc.
- Be sure to watch your child during any activity. Or better yet, join in!
- You can find more information on health and wellness for children and teens at healthpoweredkids.org.

Sleep

- Your child needs between 10 to 12 hours of sleep each night.

Safety

- 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.
- Be a good role model for your child. Do not talk or text on your cellphone while driving.
- Practice street safety. Tell your child why it is important to stay out of traffic.
- Have your child ride a tricycle on the sidewalk, away from the street. Make sure he or she wears a helmet each time while riding.

- Check outdoor playground equipment for loose parts and sharp edges. Supervise your child while at playgrounds. Do not let your child play outside alone.
- Teach your child water safety. Enroll your child in swimming lessons, if appropriate. Make sure your child is always supervised and wears a life jacket when around a lake or river.
- Keep all guns out of your child's reach. Keep guns and ammunition in different parts of the house.
- Keep all medicines, cleaning supplies and poisons out of your child's reach.
- Call the poison control center (1-800-222-1222) or your health care provider for directions in case your child swallows poison. Have these numbers handy by your telephone or program them into your phone.
- Teach your child animal safety.
- Teach your child what to do if a stranger comes up to him or her. Warn your child never to go with a stranger 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."
- Teach your child his or her name, address and phone number. Teach him or her how to dial 911.

Discipline

- Set goals and limit for your child. Make sure the goal is realistic and something your child can easily see. Teach your child that helping can be fun!
- Give your child time outs for discipline (1 minute for each year old).
- Be clear and consistent with discipline. Make sure your child understands what you are saying and knows what you want. Address the behavior, not the child. Do not use general statements like "You are a naughty girl." Choose your battles.

- **Never shake or hit your child.** If you think you are losing control, make sure your child is safe and take a 10-minute time out. If you are still not calm, call a friend, neighbor or relative to come over and help you. If you have no other options, call your local crisis nursery or First Call for Help at 651-291-0211 or dial 211.

Dental Care

- Teach your child how to brush his or her teeth. Use a soft-bristled toothbrush. You do not need to use toothpaste. Have your child brush his or her teeth every day, preferably before bedtime.
- Make regular dental appointments for cleanings and checkups. (Your child may need fluoride supplements if you have well water.)

Eye Exam

- The American Public Health Association recommends that your child get an eye exam at 4 years.
- Talk with your child's health care provider about your child having a complete eye exam at age 4 or before starting kindergarten.

Lab Work

Your child may need to have his or her lead levels checked.

- **Lead** – This is a blood test to look for high levels of lead in the blood. Lead is a metal that can get into a child's body from many things. Evidence shows that lead can be harmful to a child if the level is too high.

Immunizations (Shots) Today

Your child may receive these shots at this time:

- DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis)
- IPV (inactivated poliovirus vaccine)
- MMR (measles, mumps, rubella)
- VAR (varicella)
- influenza.

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

Child's Next Well Checkup

- Your child's next well checkup will be at age 5.
- Your child will need these shots between the ages of 4 to 6.
 - DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis)
 - IPV (inactivated poliovirus vaccine)
 - MMR (measles, mumps, rubella)
 - VAR (varicella)
 - influenza.

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