

Well Child Care at 4 Years

Nutrition

Your child should always be a part of the family at mealtime. This should be a pleasant time for the family. Give small portions of food to your child. If he is still hungry, let him have seconds. Selecting foods from all food groups (meat, dairy, grains, fruits, and vegetables) is a good way to provide a balanced diet.

Development and Discipline

At this age children usually become more cooperative in their play with other children. They are curious and imaginative.

Allow privacy while your child is changing clothes or using the bathroom. When your child starts wanting privacy on his own, let him know that you think this is good.

Breaking rules occasionally is common at this age. Making children stand in a corner by themselves for 4 minutes is usually an effective punishment. If you have questions about behavior, ask your doctor.

It is important to set rules about television watching. Limit total TV time to 1 to 2 hours per day. Children should not be allowed to watch shows with violence or sexual behaviors. Watch TV with your child and discuss the shows. Find other activities you can do with your child. Reading, hobbies, and physical activities are good alternatives to TV.

Safety Tips

Car Safety

- Never leave your child alone in a car.
- Everyone in a car must always wear seat belts or be in an appropriate booster seat or car seat.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety

- Teach your child to never ride a tricycle or bicycle in the street.
- All family members should use a bicycle helmet.
- It is much too early to expect a child to look both ways before crossing the street. Supervise all street crossing.

Poisons

- Teach your child to never take medicines without supervision and not to eat unknown substances.
- Put the poison center number on all phones.

Safety Around Strangers

- Teach your child the first and last names of family members.
- Teach your child to never go anywhere with a stranger.

Avoid Injuries

- Do not allow your child to be near knives, power tools, or mowers.

Dental Care

- Brushing teeth regularly after meals is important. Think of a way to make it fun.
- It is also a good idea to make an appointment for your child to see the dentist.
- If your child sucks his thumb, ask your doctor or dentist for advice on how to help him stop.

Immunizations

Your child may receive 1 or more shots. After a shot your child may run a fever and become irritable for about 1 day. Your child may also have some soreness, redness, and swelling where a shot was given. For fever, give your child an appropriate dose of acetaminophen. For swelling or soreness, put a wet, warm washcloth on the area of the shot 4 times a day.

Call your child's physician immediately if:

- Your child has a fever over 105°F (40.5°C).
- Your child has a severe allergic reaction beginning within 2 hours of the shot (for example, hives, wheezing or noisy breathing, swelling of the mouth or throat).
- Your child has any other unusual reaction.

Next Visit

A once-a-year check-up is recommended. Be sure to check your child's shot records before starting school to make sure he or she has all the required vaccinations.

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