

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. 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.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety

- Teach your child to never ride a tricycle or bicycle in the street.
- Have your child wear a bicycle helmet while riding a tricycle or bicycle.
- It is 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. The poison control number is
- Ask your doctor about syrup or ipecac. Use it only if you are told to do so.

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

Physical Development

- hops, runs, skips, climbs with increasing skill
- tires easily
- is accident prone
- enjoys making loud noises, but is frightened by unexpected sounds

toilets independently

- makes designs and draws recognizable objects
- manipulates blunt scissors
- dresses self (with exception of shoes)
- small muscle control lags behind large muscle

Emotional Development

- regresses to baby behavior periodically
- shows new fears (becoming aware of more dangers)
- has a penchant for silliness

Social Development

- refers to parents as final authority
- continues to test parental limits
- uses "naughty" words to observe reaction
- is ready for group activities
- talks "with" another child, but does not listen to what other child says
- is comfortable with other children, but shares grudgingly
- tattles and name-calls
- is more aware of sex role differences
- imitates adult activities

Mental Development

- is more likely to solve problems through words than aggressive action

- has a vocabulary of about 1,500 to 2,000 words
- speaks in 4 to 5 word sentences
- fancies funny, exaggerated stories
- can count to 5
- identifies some shapes
- begins to understand some concepts of time (yesterday, today, tomorrow)
- asks endless "why" questions
- usually can put toys and materials away without adult assistance
- insists on finishing an activity or project