



Four-Year Visit

This is an exciting year as your child gets ready for kindergarten. Children this age are beginning to develop even more independence and a clearer sense of self.

School Readiness!

- Most children start kindergarten at five. In some cases it will be later depending on school cutoff dates or parental preference. Consider enrolling your child in preschool or Head Start now so she will be ready for kindergarten. If you have specific concerns about school readiness for your child, discuss them with your pediatrician.
- Specific skills that will make your child’s first year at school go more smoothly include the ability to:
 - Play well with other children with little fighting or crying
 - Follow directions and listen quietly when being read a story
 - Care for him/herself (use the toilet, wash hands and dress)
- Give your child the chance to play with other children as much as possible (check the library, community websites and billboards for postings of child play groups, story times, sing-a-longs, etc.).
- Plan a special trip to visit your child’s new school and meet the teachers.

Development

- Children vary greatly in development. By 4-5 years old, most children:
 - 1) Speak in sentences and recall parts of stories.
 - 2) Stand on one foot for 10 seconds, hop, swing, climb and throw a ball overhand.
 - 3) Copy a triangle and square, use scissors, draw a person with a body and print some letters.
 - 4) Want to play more with other children, please others and share and take turns.
- Try these tips to help with development:
 - 1) Take your child to the library on a regular basis and let him choose the books he wants to read and take home. Read together every day and ask your child questions about what happened in the story.
 - 2) Limit screen time (TV, computer, video game, cell phone) to about one hour a day. Try to watch the shows with your child so you can discuss them together. Do not allow your child to have a TV in the bedroom.
 - 3) Take time to talk and listen. This helps your child feel important and gain self-esteem. It is important for him to tell you about his feelings. Ask him about the best and worst parts of his day. Teach him that everyone has ups and downs and that it is ok to have sad or negative feelings.



Sleep

- Preschoolers sleep 10-12 hours per day.
- Although most children this age no longer nap, it is still important to have “quiet time” in the afternoon to relax.
- Stick to routines with fixed times for going to bed, waking up and quiet time. Choose a quiet activity (such as reading and not TV!) for the ½ hour before bedtime.

Sexuality

- This is typically the age when children become more interested in how boys and girls are different. Use the correct terms for body parts.
- Teach your child that no one should ask to see his/her body parts or ask for secrets to be kept from adults.
- Self-exploration at this age is normal. Ask your doctor if you are worried about your child’s sexual behavior.

Behavior/Discipline

- Praise your child when he is kind to others and behaving well. Model the behavior that you expect. Demonstrate apologizing and help your child to say “I’m sorry” after hurting someone’s feelings.
- Stick to daily routines. Children behave better when they know what to expect each day. Schedule limited time for computer/TV so your child doesn’t constantly try to push you for more.
- Set limits. When a rule is broken, a logical consequence needs to follow. Spanking or hitting is never advised and won’t help. Be consistent. When your child does something wrong, explain that what she did was wrong and what will happen if it continues (for example, if she won’t share a toy, it will get taken away). Time-outs (for 4-5 minutes) are appropriate at this age.

continued >

Four-Year Visit continued...

Eating Healthy and Being Active!

- Preschoolers can be very opinionated about what they eat. Most would be happy with a bland, white, starchy diet (pasta, rice, chicken nuggets and fries). Now is the time to talk more with your child about healthy eating. Encourage fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans. These high fiber foods also help digestion and prevent constipation.
- **Mealtime Habits:** Healthy eating should be something the whole family works on together. Your child is more likely to eat healthy foods if she watches you eating them. Whenever possible, eat meals as a family with the TV off! Avoid fatty and fried items and don't keep junk food and sugary drinks in the home (instead save them for special events).
- **Plate Planner:** Your child's lunch and dinner plate should be $\frac{1}{2}$ fruits and vegetables, $\frac{1}{4}$ protein (meat, fish or tofu) and $\frac{1}{4}$ grains (whole grains like brown rice or pasta are best).
- **Drinks:** Offer your child 2 cups a day of fat-free (skim) milk. Juice should be limited (<4 ounces a day of 100% juice only). Don't offer sweetened drinks (Capri Sun, Gatorade, Hawaiian Punch, Sunny D, soda, iced-tea, lemonade) – these are full of sugar and sugar turns to fat. Instead, offer water in-between meals.
- Make sure your child is active for 1 hour or more everyday. Turn off the electronics and go play outside with your child! Take her to the park, offer swimming lessons or help her to ride a bike (always with a helmet).



Vaccines

(*vaccine schedule may vary slightly by practice)

Today:

- DtaP
- IPV (polio)
- MMR (measles, mumps and rubella)
- Varicella (chicken pox)
- The influenza vaccine is recommended during flu season.
- If you live in a high-risk town, your child may have a blood test to screen for lead poisoning.



Important Numbers

- Poison Control
1-800-222-1222
- Parental Stress Line
1-800-632-8188
- HAVEN Domestic Violence Help Line
1-617-724-0054
- Smoking Quit Line (free):
1-800-TRY TO STOP
- Your doctor's office

Websites

- AAP Healthy Children | <http://www.healthychildren.org>
(Health topics and news updates from the American Academy of Pediatrics)
- Kids Eat Right | <http://www.eatright.org/kids>
(American Dietetic Association tips on smart shopping and healthy cooking)
- Let's Move | <http://www.letsmove.gov>
(Tips for healthy eating and activity created by First Lady Michelle Obama)
- One Tough Job | <http://www.onetoughjob.org>
(Information on development and a variety of parenting topics created by the MA Children's Trust Fund)

Oral Health Tips

Your child should brush twice a day with a soft child-sized brush and a small, pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste. After she is done, teach her to spit out the paste. Don't have her rinse with water since this washes off the fluoride. Your child should see the dentist every six months.

Safety Tips

1. Use a forward-facing seat with a harness for as long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed by the maker. Then switch to a belt-positioning booster seat. Keep your child in a booster until he reaches 4'9" and is 8-12 years old.
2. Teach your child to use a helmet **every time** with bikes and anything else with wheels (scooters, rollerblades, etc.). Helmets keep heads safe!
3. Never leave your child alone in the car, house or yard. Supervise play closely near streets driveways and bodies of water.
4. It is best to keep all guns out of the home. If you must have a gun, store it unloaded and locked with ammunition locked separately. Make sure this is the case wherever your child plays.
5. Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Test them monthly and change batteries yearly.
6. Keep medicines completely out of reach and locked up.

Your child's next routine visit will be at 5 years-old.