



Seven & Eight-Year Visits



Middle childhood is a time of great change in terms of the way your child thinks, socializes and develops new skills. Your support and guidance at this time are very important.

General Advice

- Good communication is key. Take time to talk and listen to your child so he feels comfortable coming to you to discuss worries and problems.
- Children do best when they know what to expect. Try to stick to daily routines for before and after school and bedtime. Set limits and “house rules” that are clear, and discuss what will happen if these are broken. Be consistent.
- Praise your child when he is kind to others and behaving well. Always model the behavior that you expect. Do not hit or allow others to hit. If your child misbehaves, focus on why the behavior was wrong rather than being critical of him.
- Assign your child chores around the home. This helps your child learn about responsibilities and also builds self-esteem.

School

- Make an effort to attend back-to-school night and parent-teacher conferences. Show an interest in school activities.
- Agree on a regular schedule for when homework will be done (ideally after your child has a chance to unwind from school, is well-rested and is not hungry). Provide a quiet place to work free of distractions with no TV. Try to be available for homework questions.
- If your child is struggling in school, discuss it right away with your child’s teacher. She may need extra help, tutoring or an evaluation for other services.
- Talk with your child about bullying at school -- how it is never ok to bully someone else and what to do if she is being bullied.



Safety with Adults

It is important to teach your child to respect and trust others but also how to be careful. Teach your child these simple rules:

- “Secrets are not OK. No one should ever tell you to keep a secret from me or any other adult.”
- “No one should ever ask for help with his or her body parts or ask to see your private parts (except your doctor or a parent if your body needs to be checked).”
- “If you are not sure if something is OK, ask me. I will never get mad at you for asking.”
- When you bring your child to a crowded place, look around and point out where to go for help if you get separated.

Screen Time & Online Safety



- Limit screen time (TV, computer, tablet, video games, phone) to less than 1-2 hours a day. Be specific as to when these activities are allowed to avoid arguments.
- The Internet is a great way to connect your family to helpful resources and learning tools. However, not all information available to your child is safe and reliable. Don’t allow your child to have a TV or computer in his bedroom. This lets you check in on what she is viewing and for how long. It also gives you the chance to have a conversation about what she is doing. Consider tracking software or services that can filter or block certain websites.
- At this age, many children are starting to use the Internet, email, instant messaging and on-line gaming. Be clear that you will be checking emails from time to time. Be aware of who your child is playing games or chatting with on-line.
- Teach your child NEVER TO: give out personal information, share passwords, send mean messages or use the Internet to make someone look bad, or meet up with someone he only knows online.

Oral Health

Your child should brush at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and floss once a day. If your child plays sports, have him wear a mouth guard to protect his teeth. Your child should see the dentist every six months for a cleaning.

Sun Safety

Apply UVA/UVB water-proof sunscreen SPF 30 or higher 20 minutes before going outside (even on cloudy days). Reapply every 2-3 hours (more frequently if in the water).

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Eating Healthy and Being Active!

- Talk with your child about healthy eating and try to include him in food shopping and cooking. Encourage fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans.
- **Mealtime Habits:** Healthy eating should be something the whole family works on together. Your child is more likely to eat healthy foods if he watches you eating them. Whenever possible, eat meals as a family with the TV off. Limit fatty and fried foods and don't keep junk food and sugary drinks in the home - save them for special events only.
- **Plate Planner:** Your child's lunch and dinner plate should be $\frac{1}{2}$ fruits and vegetables, $\frac{1}{4}$ protein (meat, fish, beans, lentils, tofu) and $\frac{1}{4}$ grains (whole grains like brown rice or pasta are best). Offer at least 5 fruits and vegetables a day.
- **Sugary Drinks: Have your child eat fruit instead of drinking it!** Fruit juice (even 100%) isn't recommended and should be limited to 0 to <4 ounces a day since whole fruits provide more fiber and nutrients. Don't keep sweetened drinks (Capri Sun, Gatorade, Hawaiian Punch, Sunny D, soda, iced-tea, lemonade, flavored milk) in the house – these are full of sugar and sugar turns to fat. Save them for special occasions (birthday parties, etc). Instead, offer water in-between meals.
- Make sure your child is active for 1 hour or more everyday – this should include continuous exercise for at least 20-30 minutes that makes him sweat (ex. playing tag, dancing, walking fast, biking, swimming). Turn off the electronics and go play outside with your child!



Safety Tips

✓ GENERAL SAFETY

Teach your child how and when to dial 911 and what to do in case of an emergency.

✓ CAR SAFETY

Motor vehicle crashes are the #1 cause of death for children this age. Your child should still always ride restrained in the back seat. **Use of a belt-positioning booster seat is the law in MA until your child is at least 8 years old or over 4'9" (57 inches).**

✓ SPORTS/BIKE SAFETY

Make sure your child always uses a helmet when biking, skating, scooting and skiing. Your child should wear all the protective equipment made for the sport she plays (ex. mouth guards, shin pads, eye protection or helmets).

Teach your child the 'rules of the road' for biking, and watch to be sure she follows them. A child this age should not ride at dusk or after dark.

✓ WATER SAFETY

Even if your child knows how to swim, never let her swim alone. Don't let your child play around any water unless an adult is watching.

✓ GUN SAFETY

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.

Vaccines

(*vaccine schedule may vary slightly by practice)



-The influenza vaccine is recommended during flu season.

-If you have a strong family history of high cholesterol or your child is overweight, your doctor may want to do blood tests.

Important Numbers

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

Websites to Check Out...

- AAP Healthy Children | <http://www.healthychildren.org>
(Health topics and news updates from the American Academy of Pediatrics)
- Kids Health | <http://www.kidshealth.org>
(Popular interactive health website with sections for parents, kids & teens)
- Kids Eat Right | <http://www.eatright.org/kids>
(American Dietetic Assoc. 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)
- Boston Navigator | <http://www.bostonnavigator.org>
(Search for youth programs in the Boston area by age and location)

Your child's next routine visit will be in one year.