



Three-Year Visit

Older toddlers are full of energy and want to know the reason for everything – get used to hearing “why?” a lot! Many people call age 3 to 4 the “magic years” since your child’s world at this time is full of fantasy and imagination.

Healthy Eating

- Nearly 1 in 3 kids are overweight in the United States. There are steps that you can take NOW to reduce your child’s likelihood of becoming too heavy and keep him on a healthy track for the rest of his life.
- **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.
- **Plate Planner:** Make your child’s lunch and dinner plate ½ fruits and vegetables, ¼ protein (meat, fish or tofu) and ¼ grains (whole grains like brown rice or pasta are best).
- **Drinks:** Offer your child 2 cups a day of fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk. Juice should be limited to no more than 4 ounces a day (100% juice only). Don’t give your child sweetened drinks (Capri Sun, Gatorade, Hawaiian Punch, soda, iced-tea, lemonade) – these are full of sugar and sugar turns to fat. Instead, offer water in-between meals.

Exercise

- Most toddlers and preschoolers spend too much time watching TV or playing video games. Limit screen time to less than 1 hour a day and don’t ever allow a TV in your child’s bedroom.
- Turn off the electronics and go play outside with your child! This will help her to improve motor skills and coordination. Take her to the park or have her ride a tricycle.
- Make family time an active time! Instead of going to the movies on the weekend, take the family on a hike, play tag, fly a kite or throw a ball back and forth. If it is cold, bundle up and enjoy the fresh air!

Behavior/Discipline



- **Praise your child when she is behaving well and model the behavior that you expect.**
- Most children have fewer temper tantrums by 3 ½ years old and by age 4, they usually stop. Remember that tantrums are a normal part of development. Stay calm, ignore the behavior and don’t give in.
- Your child will test different behaviors to see what reactions she gets. Set limits that are clear, specific and consistent.
- Use time-outs when rules are broken. Choose a boring place with no distractions. Try 1 minute of time-out for every year of age (3-min for 3-yr-old). Don’t respond to pleas, promises, questions or excuses. Don’t start the timer until your child has calmed down.
- Let your child make choices whenever you can. Be sure to give her a few minutes warning before changing activities.

Oral Health Tips

- Help your child brush her teeth twice a day with a soft child-sized brush and a small, pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste. Discuss with your doctor if your child needs extra fluoride. If you haven’t already, bring your child to a dentist (ask if you need helping finding one).

Toilet Training

- Most children are dry during the day and have bowel control by 3 to 4 years of age. Dryness overnight takes longer – sometimes closer to 5 years old.
- Make potty time fun and enjoyable. Never make your child feel bad about accidents.
- If your child hasn’t shown any interest in toilet training, discuss it with your doctor. Be patient and supportive! Consider using a sticker reward chart to help.

Sleep

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

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Development

- Children vary greatly in development. At this age, many preschoolers will:
 - 1) Know their name, age and sex.
 - 2) Speak in longer sentences, use pronouns (I, you, he/she) and are mostly understandable to strangers.
 - 3) Climb well, jump, kick a ball and ride a tricycle.
 - 4) Copy a circle and a cross and draw a person with two body parts.
 - 5) Do make-believe/imaginary play and understand turn-taking and sharing (even if they don't like it).
 - 6) Play more interactively with other children.
- Try these tips to help with development:
 - 1) Read books, sing songs and play rhyming games with your child every day. Ask her questions about the pictures and stories you read together. Take her to the library and let her choose books.
 - 2) Play pretend with your child. Give your child a variety of clothes and props for dress-up.
 - 3) Give your child chances to play with other kids her age. Help her with turn-taking.
 - 4) Limit screen time (TV, computer, video game, cell phone) to no more than 0-1 hour per day.
 - 5) Talk to your doctor if you have any concerns about your child's development.



Safety Tips

Injuries are the leading cause of death of children under 4 years in the U.S.

Most injuries can be prevented.

1. Use a forward-facing seat with a harness for as long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed by the manufacturer.
2. Teach your child to use a helmet with her very first bike. Helmets keep heads safe!
3. Don't let your child out of your sight - even for a second - near water, tubs, buckets, pools, dogs, lawnmowers, driveways and streets.
4. Lock doors to dangerous areas. Use safety gates, cabinet locks and socket plugs. Install guards on all windows above the 1st floor (children can climb up onto furniture that is close to windows and fall out).
5. Watch your child very closely in the kitchen. She can now climb and reach up to higher areas where hot liquids, foods and grease can cause serious burns.
6. Keep medicines completely out of reach and preferably locked up. Remind other caregivers to secure their meds too (as medicine in grandma's purse can look like candy).
7. Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and change batteries yearly.

Immunizations

(*vaccine schedule may vary slightly by practice)

Today:

-The influenza vaccine is recommended during flu season.



-Your child will have a blood test to screen for lead poisoning and anemia.

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 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)

Your child's next routine visit will be at 4 years old.