

Well Child Care at 3 Years

Nutrition

Mealtime should be a pleasant time for the family. If food battles are common, ask us for advice. Your child should be completely feeding himself now. Avoid junk foods. You are the parent, so you make the rules about good healthy foods. Avoid grazing. Your child should have three meals per day with planned snacks. Limit juice and other sugary drinks.

Development and Discipline

Children at this age often want to do things by themselves; this is normal. Patience and encouragement will help 3-year-olds develop new skills and build self-confidence. Some children still require diapers during the day and night; however, most children are completely toilet trained during the day. Avoid putting too many demands on the child or shaming him about wearing diapers. Let your child know how proud and happy you are as toilet training progresses.

For all behaviors that you would like to encourage in your child, try to “catch your child being good”. That is, tell your child how proud you are when he does what you want him to do.

Here are some good methods for helping children learn about rules and to keep them safe:

1. Child-proof the home. Go through every room in your house and remove anything that is valuable, dangerous, or messy. Preventive child-proofing will stop many possible discipline problems. Don't expect a child not to get into things just because you say no.
2. Divert and substitute. If a child is playing with something you don't want him to have, replace it with another object or toy that the child enjoys. This approach avoids a fight and does not place children in a situation where they'll say “no”.
3. Teach and lead. Have as few rules as necessary and enforce them. These rules should be rules important for the child's safety. If a rule is broken, after a short and clear explanation, punish immediately by having the child sit alone for 3 minutes. It is very important that punishment come immediately after a rule is broken.
4. Be consistent with discipline. Don't make threats that you cannot carry out. If you say you're going to do it, do it.
5. Many children benefit from pre-school experiences that encourage play and socialization, not academics.

Dental Care

-) Brushing teeth regularly after meals is important. Think up a game and make brushing fun. It is still important to supervise your child's brushing at this age.
-) Use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste to minimize amount swallowed.
-) Make an appointment for your child to see the dentist for a complete exam.

Safety Tips

Avoid Fires and Burns

-) Practice your fire escape plan.
-) Check your smoke detector battery.
-) Keep matches and lighters out of reach.
-) Turn your water heater down to 120°F.

Car, Pedestrian, and Play Safety

-) Never leave your child alone in a car.
-) Everyone in a car must always wear seat belts, and continue to use car seats.
-) Hold onto your child's hand when you are near traffic.
-) Do not allow riding of a tricycle or other riding toys on driveways or near traffic.
-) Have your child wear a bicycle helmet while riding a tricycle.
-) It is too early to expect a child to look both ways before crossing the street. Supervise all street crossings.

Avoid Drowning

-) Continuously watch your child around any water.

Poisons

-) Keep all medicines, vitamins, cleaning fluids, etc. locked away.
-) Put the poison center number on all phones. The poison control number is **1-800-222-1222**.
-) Purchase all medicines in containers with safety caps.
-) Do not store toxic substances in drink bottles, glasses, or jars.

Safety Around Strangers

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

Avoid Falls

-) Do not allow your child to climb on ladders, chairs, or cabinets.
-) Make sure windows are closed or have screens that cannot be pushed out.

Normal Development

Here's what you might see your child doing between the ages of 3 and 4 years.

Physical Development

-) jumps, gallops, tiptoes, runs smoothly
-) can walk backwards a long distance
-) may stumble and fall frequently
-) rides a tricycle
-) undresses self, but needs help with dressing
-) buttons and unbuttons large buttons
-) uses crayons with somewhat more control
-) most primary teeth have erupted

Emotional Development

-) is more relaxed and flexible than "terrible twos"
-) still cries and hits at times
-) quickly alternates between shyness and exuberance
-) may show fear of unfamiliar objects or activities
-) may want to be a "baby at times"
-) begins to talk about dreams

Next Visit:

A once-a-year check-up is recommended.

Social Development

-) is keenly interested in family activities
-) idolizes parents
-) seeks approval from adults
-) tests limits constantly
-) often prefers to play alone
-) may have an imaginary playmate
-) shares and takes turns occasionally
-) quarrels with other children

Mental Development

-) develops more stable concept of self
-) speaks about 1000 words
-) speaks in 3 to 4 word sentences
-) grasps some grammatical principles
-) delights in hearing stories over and over again
-) loves learning short rhymes and songs
-) may match or identify primary colors
-) enjoys imaginative and imitative play
-) can assume some very simple responsibilities
-) puts toys away with adult help
-) has attention span of no more than a few minutes
-) can choose between alternatives

Each child is unique. It is therefore difficult to describe exactly what should be expected at each stage of a child's development. While certain behaviors and physical milestones tend to occur at certain ages, a wide spectrum of growth and behavior for each age is normal. These guidelines are offered as a way of showing a general progression through the developmental stages rather than as fixed requirements for normal development at specific ages. It is perfectly natural for a child to attain some milestones earlier and other milestones later than the general trend. Keep this in mind as you review these milestones.

If you have any concerns related to your child's own pattern of development, please give us a call.