Well Check: 4 years

Children’s physical skills develop far faster than their good judgment. Keep an eye on your children when they’re playing, and protect them from dangerous situations like chasing a ball into the street.

Helping your child learn and grow

• Help your child start to prepare for school.
  – Read books together every day. Ask your child questions about the stories. Take your child to the library to choose books.
  – Help your child describe feelings. Praise your child for good behavior, and teach your child to apologize.
  – Make time for your child to play with others their age. Teach your child to take turns.
  – Consider enrolling your child in preschool or Head Start.

• Help your child learn good sleep habits. Your child needs 10 to 13 hours of sleep each day.

• Create daily routines at home.
  – Eat meals together as a family whenever possible and without distractions.
  – Have quiet bedtime routines, and put your child to bed at about the same time every night.
  – Have all members of the family follow the house rules.

Feeding your child

• At this age, children should be eating the same foods as the rest of the family.

• Model healthy eating habits. Offer a variety of fruits, vegetables, and grains for your child to choose from. Avoid unhealthy junk food and fast food.

• If you’re concerned about your child’s weight or eating habits, ask your doctor for advice.

(Milestone) At 4 years old, most children:

• Play well with other children and would rather play with other children than alone.
• Talk about the things they’re interested in and tell stories.
• Can catch a bounced ball, hop, and stand on one foot for several seconds.
• Can name the colors and some numbers.
• Can draw a person with 2 to 4 body parts.
• Can say their name and address.

Your child will reach milestones at their own pace. For detailed information about milestones, visit cdc.gov/actearly, or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

Keeping your child active

• Limit screen time. Establish rules to limit media use and create a media plan for your family at: healthychildren.org/MediaUse Plan

• Be active. Except when sleeping, your child should not be inactive for more than an hour at a time.
Keeping your child safe and well

• Make sure your child gets recommended immunizations on schedule.

• Be safe at home and other places.
  – Make sure a responsible adult is always looking after your child while in your home, yard, garage, or on a playground.
  – Have your child cross the street only with a responsible person.
  – Watch closely when your child is near water. Teach your child how to swim. Make sure pools have locked fences around them and play pools are emptied after use.
  – Make sure your child wears a helmet while riding a bike or scooter, skating, skiing, or snowboarding. Wear your helmet as an example.
  – Put a hat and sunscreen on your child before going out in the sun.
  – Teach your child to ask the owner if it’s okay before petting a dog.
  – Lock up medicines, poisons, chemicals, cigarettes, lighters, and alcohol. If there is a gun in any house that your child visits, make sure it’s locked up at all times.

• Be safe in and around cars.
  – When your child reaches the weight or height limit for their car seat, switch to a belt-positioning booster seat.
  – Your child needs to ride in the back seat of the car until age 12.
  – Make sure everyone in the car wears seat belts.
  – Never leave your child alone in a car.

• Teach your child to be safe with other adults.
  – No adult should ever ask your child to keep a secret from you. No one should ask to see your child’s private parts. Teach your child the correct names for their private parts.
  – Teach your child to tell a trusted adult if anyone makes them feel uncomfortable.
  – If you or your child feel unsafe, our office can help you find someone who can help.

• Help build healthy teeth-cleaning habits.
  – Help your child brush their teeth after breakfast and before bed using a pea-sized amount of toothpaste.
  – Visit the dentist every 6 months.
  – Give your child water instead of juice to drink. Juice has a lot of sugar, which is bad for teeth.

My follow-up appointment
Your next well-child visit will be when your child is 5 years old.
Date: ______________ Time: ______________

Here are helpful resources in the meantime:

For more age-appropriate safety information, visit safekids.org and sign up for the monthly newsletter.

If you need help with housing, food, or if you feel unsafe at home, call 2-1-1, or visit 211ut.org for community services.

When should I call?
If you think your child may have eaten poisons, medicines, or cleaning supplies, call Poison Control immediately at 1-800-222-1222.

This is general information that applies to most families. If your doctor tells you something different, follow what your doctor says.