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## Well Child Care at 3 Years

### Nutrition

Mealtime should be a pleasant time for the family. Your child should be feeding himself completely on his own now. Buy and serve healthy foods and limit junk foods. Your child will still have a daily snack. Choose and eat healthy snacks such as cheese, fruit, or yogurt. Televisions should never be on during mealtime. If you are having problems at mealtime, ask your healthcare provider for advice.

### Development

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. Many children still require diapers during the day or night. 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.

### Behavior Control

For 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. Be positive and enthusiastic when your child does things to please you.

Here are some good methods for helping children learn about rules:

- 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."
- 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, clear, and gentle explanation, immediately find a place for your child to sit alone for 3 minutes. It is very important that a "time-out" comes immediately after a rule is broken.
- Make consequences as logical as possible. For example, if you don't stay in your car seat, the car doesn't go. If you throw your food, you don't get any more and may be hungry.
- Be consistent with discipline. Remember that encouragement and praise are more likely to motivate a young child than threats and fear. Do not threaten a consequence that you do not carry out. If you say there is a consequence for misbehavior and the child misbehaves, carry through with the consequence gently, but firmly.

### Reading and Electronic Media

Children learn reading skills while watching you read. They start to figure out that printed symbols have certain meanings. Young children love to participate directly with you and the

book. They like to open flaps, ask questions, and make comments. It is important to set rules about television watching. Limit total TV time to no more than 1 hour per day.

## **Dental Care**

- Brushing teeth regularly after meals is important. Think up a game and make brushing fun.
- Make an appointment for your child to see the dentist.

## **Safety Tips**

Child-proof the home. Go through every room in your house and remove anything that is either 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.

### **Fires and Burns**

- Practice a fire escape plan.
- Check smoke detectors. Replace the batteries if necessary.
- Keep matches and lighters out of reach.
- Turn your water heater down to 120°F (50°C).

### **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.

### **Car Safety**

- Never leave your child alone in a car.
- Everyone in a car must always wear seat belts or be in an appropriate booster seat or car seat.

### **Pedestrian and Tricycle Safety**

- Hold onto your child's hand when you are near traffic.
- Practice crossing the street. Make sure your child stays right with you.
- Do not allow riding of a tricycle or other riding toys on driveways or near traffic.
- All family members should use a bicycle helmet, even when riding a tricycle.

### **Water Safety**

- Watch your child constantly when he is around any water.

### **Poisoning**

- Keep all medicines, vitamins, cleaning fluids, and other chemicals locked away.
- Put the poison center number on all phones.
- Buy medicines in containers with safety caps.
- Do not put poisons into drink bottles, glasses, or jars.

### **Strangers**

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

### **Smoking**

- Children who live in a house where someone smokes have more respiratory infections. Their symptoms are also more severe and last longer than those of children who live in a smoke-free home.
- If you smoke, set a quit date and stop. Set a good example for your child. If you cannot quit, do NOT smoke in the house or near children.
- Teach your child that even though smoking is unhealthy, he should be civil and polite when he is around people who smoke.

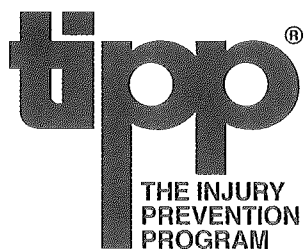
### **Immunizations**

Routine vaccinations are usually completed before this age. Before starting kindergarten your child will need vaccinations. Children should receive an annual flu shot. Ask your doctor if you have any questions about whether your child needs any vaccines.

### **Next Visit**

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

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## 2 TO 4 YEARS

### Safety for Your Child

Did you know that injuries are the leading cause of death of children younger than 4 years in the United States? Most of these injuries can be prevented.

Often, injuries happen because parents are not aware of what their children can do. Children *learn fast*, and before you know it your child will be *jumping, running, riding* a tricycle, and *using tools*. Your child is at special risk for injuries from falls, drowning, poisons, burns, and car crashes. Your child doesn't understand dangers or remember "no" while playing and exploring.

#### Falls

Because your child's abilities are so great now, he or she will find an endless variety of dangerous situations at home and in the neighborhood.

Your child can fall off play equipment, out of windows, down stairs, off a bike or tricycle, and off anything that can be climbed on. **Be sure the surface under play equipment is soft enough to absorb a fall.** Use safety-tested mats or loose-fill materials (shredded rubber, sand, wood chips, or bark) maintained to a depth of at least 9 inches underneath play equipment. Install the protective surface at least 6 feet (more for swings and slides) in all directions from the equipment.

Lock the doors to any dangerous areas. **Use gates on stairways and install operable window guards** above the first floor. Fence in the play yard. **If your child has a serious fall or does not act normally after a fall, call your doctor.**

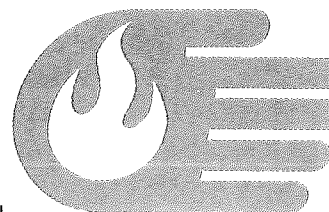
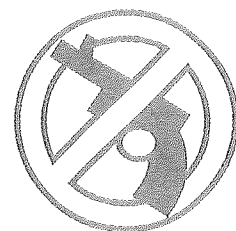
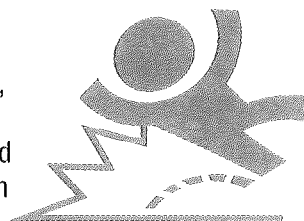
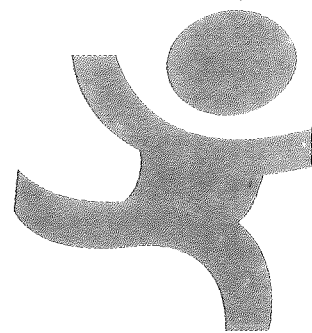
#### Firearm Hazards

Children in homes where guns are present are in more danger of being shot by themselves, their friends, or family members than of being injured by an intruder. It is best to keep all guns out of the home. If you choose to keep a gun, keep it unloaded and in a locked place, with the ammunition locked separately. **Handguns are especially dangerous.** Ask if the homes where your child visits or is cared for have guns and how they are stored.

#### Burns

The kitchen can be a dangerous place for your child, especially when you are cooking. If your child is underfoot, hot liquids, grease, and hot foods can spill on him or her and cause serious burns. Find something safe for your child to do while you are cooking.

Remember that kitchen appliances and other hot surfaces such as irons, ovens, wall heaters, and outdoor grills can burn your child long after you have finished using them.



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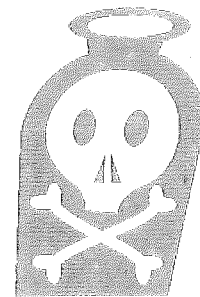
American Academy of Pediatrics



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If your child does get burned, immediately put cold water on the burned area. Keep the burned area in cold water for a few minutes to cool it off. Then cover the burn loosely with a dry bandage or clean cloth. Call your doctor for all burns. To protect your child from tap water scalds, the hottest temperature at the faucet should be no more than 120°F. In many cases you can adjust your water heater.

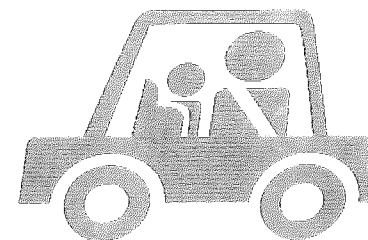
Make sure you have a working smoke alarm on every level of your home, especially in furnace and sleeping areas. Test the alarms every month. It is best to use smoke alarms that use long-life batteries, but if you do not, change the batteries at least once a year.



## Poisonings

Your child will be able to *open* any drawer and *climb* anywhere curiosity leads. Your child may *swallow anything* he or she finds. Use only household products and medicines that are absolutely necessary and keep them safely capped and out of sight and reach. Keep all products in their original containers.

If your child does put something poisonous in his or her mouth, call the Poison Help Line immediately. Attach the Poison Help Line number (1-800-222-1222) to your phone. Do not make your child vomit.



## And Remember Car Safety

Car crashes are the **greatest danger** to your child's life and health. The crushing forces to your child's brain and body in a collision or sudden stop, even at low speeds, can cause injuries or death.

**To prevent these injuries, correctly USE a car safety seat EVERY TIME** your child is in the car. If your child weighs more than the highest weight allowed by the seat or if his or her ears come to the top of the car safety seat, use a belt-positioning booster seat.

The safest place for all children to ride is in the back seat. In an emergency, if a child **must** ride in the front seat, move the vehicle seat back as far as it can go, away from the air bag.

Do not allow your child to play or ride a tricycle in the street. **Your child should play in a fenced yard or playground.** Driveways are also dangerous. Walk behind your car before you back out of your driveway to be sure your child is not behind your car. You may not see your child through the rearview mirror.

**Remember, the biggest threat to your child's life and health is an injury.**

### From Your Doctor

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The information in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on the individual facts and circumstances.