

EARLY CHILDHOOD – 4 YEARS

Promotion of healthy habits

Injury prevention

Establish and enforce consistent, explicit, and firm rules for safe behavior.

Continue to use a car seat or a properly secured booster until the child weighs 60 pounds or his head is higher than the back of the seat.

Ensure that swimming pools in the child's community, in his apartment complex, or at his home have a four-sided fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate. Children should be supervised by an adult whenever they are in or around water.

Teach the child how to swim.

Continue to put sunscreen on the child before he goes outside to play or swim.

Continue to keep the child's environment free of smoke. Keep the home and car nonsmoking zones.

Test smoke detectors to ensure that they work properly. Change batteries yearly.

Keep cigarettes, lighters, matches, alcohol, and electrical tools locked up and/or out of the child's sight and reach.

Exclude poisons, medications, and toxic household products from the home or keep them in locked cabinets. Have safety caps on all medications.

Keep Syrup of Ipecac in the home to be used as directed by the poison control center or the health professional. Keep the number of the poison control center near the telephone.

Ensure that guns, if in the home, are locked up and that ammunition is stored separately. A trigger lock is an additional important precaution.

Never leave the child alone in the car or the house or while taking a bath.

Supervise all play near streets or driveways.

Know where your child is at all times. He is too young to be roaming the neighborhood alone.

Teach your child pedestrian and neighborhood safety skills.

Teach the child about playground safety.

Ensure that the child wears a bicycle helmet when riding a tricycle or a bicycle with training wheels.

Choose caregivers carefully. Discuss with them their attitudes about and behavior in relation to discipline. Prohibit corporal punishment.

Teach the child safety rules regarding strangers.

Nutrition

Serve the child three regular meals and two nutritious snacks per day. Make mealtimes pleasant and companionable. Encourage conversation.

Provide nutritious snacks rich in complex carbohydrates. Limit high-fat or low-nutrient foods and beverages such as candy, chips, or soft drinks.

Offer the child nutritious foods and let him decide what and how much to eat. Anticipate that the child will imitate peers in food likes and dislikes. He will have an increasing list of accepted foods.

Model and encourage good eating habits. Serve a variety of healthy foods.

Ensure that the child's caregiver feeds him nutritious foods.

Oral health

Ensure that the child brushes his teeth twice a day with a pea-size amount of fluoridated toothpaste. Regularly supervise tooth brushing.

Give the child fluoride supplements as recommended by the health professional based on the level of fluoride in the child's drinking water.

Learn how to prevent dental injuries and handle dental emergencies, especially the loss or fracture of a tooth.

If the child regularly sucks his fingers or thumb begin to intervene to get him to discontinue.

Schedule a dental appointment for the child every six months, unless his dentist determines otherwise based on his individual needs/susceptibility to disease.

Sexuality education

Anticipate the child's normal curiosity about his body and the differences between boys and girls.

Use correct terms for all body parts, including genitalia.

Answer questions about "where babies come from."

Explain to the child that no one should touch his "private parts" without his permission.

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Promotion of social competence

- Praise the child for cooperation and accomplishments.
- Encourage the child to talk with you about his preschool, friends, or observations. Answer his questions.
- Encourage interactive reading with the child.
- Spend individual time with the child, doing something you both enjoy.
- Enlarge the child's experiences through trips and visits to parks and other places of interest.
- Provide opportunities for the four year old to socialize with other children in play groups, preschool, or other community activities.
- Promote physical activity in a safe environment.
- Encourage assertiveness without excessive aggression.
- Set developmentally appropriate limits.
- Use time out, removal of source of conflict, and other options for unacceptable behavior.
- Encourage self-discipline.
- Limit television viewing to an average of one hour per day of appropriate programs. Watch the programs together and discuss them.
- Provide some type of structured learning environment for the child, whether in Head Start, preschool, Sunday school, or a community program or child care center.
- Discuss with the health professional how to tell when the child is ready for school.

Promotion of constructive family relationships and parental health

- Listen to and show respect for the child.
- Show interest in preschool and/or child care activities.
- Show affection in the family.
- Spend some individual time with each child.
- Participate in games and other physical activities with the child.
- Encourage the development of good sibling relationships. Acknowledge conflicts between siblings. Whenever possible, attempt to resolve conflicts without taking sides.
- Do not allow hitting, biting, or other violent behavior.
- Share meals as a family whenever possible. Spend time talking to each other.
- Handle anger constructively in the family.

Discuss with the health professional your own preventive and health-promoting practices (e.g. using seat belts, avoiding tobacco, eating properly, exercising and doing breast self-exams or testicular self-exams).

Promotion of community interactions

- Ask about resources or referrals for food (e.g. WIC), housing, or transportation if needed.
- Discuss with the health professional possible programs for the child: preschools, early intervention programs, prekindergarten programs, kindergarten, Head Start, swimming and other exercise programs, or other community programs.
- Visit the child's preschool or other child care program unannounced. Ask if all children are immunized.
- Learn about and consider attending parent education classes or parent support groups.
- Maintain or expand ties to your community through social, religious cultural, volunteer, and recreational organizations.
- Discuss with the health professional choosing and evaluating child care programs. Discuss the arrangements you have made.
- Find out what you can do to make your community safer. Advocate for and participate in a neighborhood watch program.
- Advocate for adequate housing and play spaces/playgrounds.
- Recommend that schools provide early and regular comprehensive health education that encourages healthy lifestyles.