

MIDDLE CHILDHOOD – 6 YEARS

Promotion of healthy habits

Be a role model for the child by having a healthy lifestyle.

Ensure that the child gets adequate sleep. For children 6-10 years of age, the suggested bedtime is 8-9 PM.

Encourage regular physical activity.

Limit television watching to an average of one hour per day of appropriate programs. Watch the programs together and discuss them.

Reinforce with the child personal care and hygiene.

Injury prevention

Enforce consistent, explicit, and firm rules for safe behavior.

Continue to ensure that the child wears a seat belt in the car at all times.

Reinforce with the child safety rules for swimming pools. Teach the child how to swim.

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 near water.

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

Continue to keep the child's environment free of smoke.

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

Reinforce with the child safety rules for the home. Conduct fire drills at home. Lock up poisons, matches, and electrical tools.

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

Reinforce with the child safety rules for getting to and from school. Reinforce with the child pedestrian and neighborhood safety skills.

Reinforce with the child safety rules for bicycles, including use of proper traffic signals. Ensure that the child always wears a helmet when riding a bicycle.

Reinforce playground safety.

Ensure that the child is supervised before and after school in a safe environment.

Reinforce with the child safety rules for interacting with strangers (e.g. answering the telephone or the door, never getting into a stranger's car). Ensure that the child's school curriculum includes information on how to deal with strangers.

Teach the child about sports safety, including the need to wear protective sports gear such as a mouth guard or a face protector.

Nutrition

Ensure that the child eats 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.

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

Help the child learn to choose appropriate foods, including five servings of fruits and vegetables daily.

Encourage the child to eat a balanced breakfast or ensure that the school provides one.

Ensure that the child eats a nutritious lunch at school, either through the school lunch program or by packing a lunch.

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.

As the child's permanent molars erupt, ensure that his dentist evaluates them for application of dental sealants.

Sexuality education

Answer questions at a level appropriate to the child's understanding.

Have age-appropriate sexual education books in the home that will answer some questions and encourage the child to ask others.

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Promotion of social competence

Praise the child for cooperation and accomplishments.

Encourage the child to talk with you about his school, friends, or observations. Answer his questions.

Encourage the child to express his feelings.

Encourage reading.

Spend individual time with the child, doing something you both enjoy.

Enlarge the child's experiences through family trips.

Provide opportunities for the six year old to interact with other children, including team or group activities.

Help the child learn how to get along with his peers.

Help the child learn how to follow group rules.

Promote physical activity in a safe environment.

Set limits and establish consequences for unacceptable behavior.

Encourage self-discipline and impulse control.

Expect the child to follow family rules, such as those for bedtime, television viewing, and chores.

Teach the child to respect authority.

Foster the child's ability to communicate with parents, teachers, and other adults.

Ensure that the child understands the difference between right and wrong.

Teach the child how to manage anger and resolve conflicts without violence.

Assign age-appropriate chores, including responsibility for own belongings.

Provide personal space for the child at home, even if limited.

Promotion of constructive family relationships and parental health

Serve as a positive ethical and behavioral role model.

Contribute to the child's self-esteem through praising him and showing affection toward him.

Show interest in school and after-school activities.

Set reasonable expectations.

Promote self-responsibility.

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.

Share meals as a family whenever possible. Spend time talking to each other.

Know the child's friends and their families.

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, housing, or transportation if needed.

Discuss with the health professional possible programs for your child: schools; before- and after-school programs; swimming, soccer, and other exercise programs; or other community programs.

Participate as a family in school and community organizations and activities.

Contribute regularly to school or community activities that require adult supervision.

Explore or continue to participate in social, religious, cultural, volunteer, and recreational organizations.

Advocate for community programs and facilities for children (recreational, sports, and educational activities).

Promote social connections with friends and neighbors and ties with extended family members.

Participate in activities that reflect cultural diversity (e.g. holidays, festivals, musical events, dance performances), and teach the child about his own culture.

Find out what you can do to make your community safer. Advocate for and participate in a neighborhood watch program.

Recommend that schools provide early and regular comprehensive health education that encourages healthy lifestyles.