



## Care Tips: 3-Year-Old

### **Child Can:**

Walk on tip toes, stand on one foot and catch a ball. Draw circles and lines. Be a bit “bossy” at times. Love to laugh and play with friends.

### **Safety**

Your child’s world is growing! He is now beginning to explore on foot or a tricycle, play ball and climb trees. If you haven’t already, begin teaching your child good safety habits like:

- How to call 911.
- Wearing a bike helmet.
- Not playing in or around cars.
- Not talking to people you do not know.

Remember to check your child’s play area often for hazards like broken glass, holes and unlocked gates. Keep the ground underneath play equipment covered with a soft material to absorb falls. Keep a close eye on children – they move so fast!

Teach your child safety rules for games and activities. Teach the dangers of water and start swimming lessons. Burns and fires are always a concern. Teach your child how to “stop, drop and roll” if their clothes catch on fire. Have a plan of escape to leave your home during a fire and practice it.

Check your child’s height and weight. Has he outgrown his current safety seat? If yes, the next step is a booster seat. It still goes in the back seat of the car. Check behind your car before backing up. Never leave your child alone in the car.

### **Nutrition**

Your child may begin some food rituals like eating one food at a time, sitting in a particular chair for a meal or eating from a special plate, all of which is normal. Even though this may seem strange to us, food rituals provide a feeling of security for children.

Is it time to re-certify your child for WIC? Let us guide you in serving healthy meals and snacks for your child. Farmers’ market vouchers may be available for your child. Ask your WIC representative. Use these vouchers to buy fresh fruits and vegetables during the summer.

### **Dental Care**

Your child should have all his baby or primary teeth. It is very important to show children how to care for their teeth. But parents still need to be in charge of tooth brushing to assure that all tooth surfaces are adequately cleaned. Let your child watch as you care for your teeth, then let them try. After your child “brushes” his teeth, you will need to brush his teeth again to be sure all the teeth are receiving the proper attention and care. Use only a thin smear of toothpaste on his brush, since he may swallow some of it. Also, floss your child’s teeth daily. Do not ignore injuries, falls or bumps of any kind. Your dentist should look at a fractured tooth or one that has changed color or position. Remember to take your child to the dentist for check-ups.

first dental visit by age 1. Contact your dentist immediately if your child has an injury that results in a tooth becoming discolored, broken or pushed out of position.

### **Immunizations**

At age 3, your child should have most of his shots (he will get a few more at school entry). However, do check your child's shot record and call the Immunization Unit in Greensboro or High Point at 336-641-3245 if you have any questions. Also check with your child's health care provider for information regarding the influenza (flu) vaccine. Visit [www.cdc.gov/immunizations](http://www.cdc.gov/immunizations) for a complete immunization schedule.

### **Exercise**

Take walks with your child and play outdoor games using balls (since your child can catch now). Visit a playground so your child can climb and jump. Listening and dancing to music may also be fun.

### **Signs and Symptoms of Illness**

Most parents worry about their child being sick and not knowing it. The big question is when to call or go to the doctor. The best rule is to call your doctor immediately if your child looks or acts differently. It will help both of you and your health care provider if you can tell him specifically what is different.

### **Behavior/Discipline**

During the sometimes "bossy" stage, your child may try your patience. Just remember to be calm and speak in a firm tone when addressing your child's behavior. Let him know it's the action you don't like, not him as a person.

### **Sexuality**

Three-year-olds enjoy being affectionate with other children and adults. By this age, children can understand the physical differences between males and females. There may be some display of sexual organs with other children. Children at this age are curious about how boys and girls differ when they urinate (pee). Your child may also ask you, "Where do babies come from?" You may want to use an appropriate picture book to explain this, just keep the answer simple. If your child wants to know more, she will ask.

### **Lead Poisoning**

Did you remember to get your child tested for lead? If not, ask your health care provider. Have you moved lately, maybe into a house built in the 1970s? What does the paint look like – is it peeling? If you answered yes, let your landlord or manager know.

If you own your home, call Environmental Health, 336-641-3771 for advice on repairing your home.

For more information contact Guilford County Department of Public Health at 336-641-7777 or [www.myguilford.com](http://www.myguilford.com)