



Care Tips: 4-Year-Old

Child can:

Swing by himself. Dress himself. Create stories and tell them to you. Sometimes ask a lot of questions. Like to pretend he's big, like a nurse or doctor, mom or dad, police officer or mail carrier.

Safety

Keep your car doors locked and your child in a safety seat for all trips – short and long! Your child is probably ready for a booster seat now. Check his height and weight to be sure. Don't put your child near airbags in a vehicle.

Tell your child about people who can help him if he is in trouble or scared in a public place – police officer, store clerk. Make sure your child knows his full name, your name, address and phone number in case you and your child are ever separated, like at a mall. Emphasize the importance of never accepting anything from strangers (like candy, rides, pets, etc.).

Continue teaching safety rules, such as always stopping at the curb, never going near water alone, wearing a bicycle helmet, etc. Explain why these rules are important to follow.

Make sure your home has working smoke detectors. Test them monthly.

Nutrition

Here are some tips to build good eating habits:

- Serve small portions.
- Give your child some choices in foods to eat.
- Offer healthy snacks between meals.
- Praise your child for good eating behavior.
- Serve only one new food at a meal.

Dental Care

Make sure your child brushes often, after each meal if possible. Talk to your child about how important it is to keep his mouth and his teeth clean. Make toothbrushing fun! Let your child choose a child-size toothbrush in a color he likes; maybe he'll brush longer! Use only a thin smear of toothpaste on the brush. Once a day, after he brushes, go back over all the teeth with a toothbrush to make sure all the tooth surfaces are adequately cleaned. Floss teeth daily. Do not ignore injuries, falls or bumps of any kinds. Your dentist should look at a fractured tooth or one that has changed color or position. Children should be having regular dental visits once or twice a year.

Immunizations

Your child will need a few more immunizations to enter kindergarten. Visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines for a complete immunization schedule.

Your child will also need a kindergarten assessment (physical exam) preformed before he enters school. This is a state law. Check with your child's health care provider regarding the influenza (flu) vaccine.

Exercise

Provide opportunities for "free play" each day. Include activities like walking on a curved line, a straight line and with a bean bag on his head. Play games like "see how fast you can hop" or "how high you can jump." These activities are fun, provide exercise and help develop balance and coordination. Take walks as a family. Limit television time.

Behavior/Discipline

Time-out can still be used but the time frame will need to be extended. Another way to discipline your child is by taking away things until the behavior you want is shown. For example, if your child has a ball but is unwilling to share it with a playmate, put the ball away and send the playmate home and then explain why.

Sexuality

"Privacy" should be explained to your child and rules about respecting others' privacy can follow. Talk about why people want privacy and things people do in private, like going to the toilet. You can also discuss safety issues like "good touch" and "bad touch." Also, more questions will continue about where babies come from.

For more information contact Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Division at 336-641-7777 or www.myguilford.com