

## **CHILDHOOD**

### **Nutrition**

Healthy eating habits can be a challenge in childhood. Some children seem to get “stuck in food ruts” where they eat the same familiar foods and will not try new ones. This is normal. Try to provide three nutritious meals and two healthy snacks daily. They should have a minimum of 5 fruits and vegetables a day. It is important to serve three servings of lowfat milk a day to meet calcium and Vitamin D requirements. Children ages 4-8 years of age, need 12-16 ounces of low fat milk/day, plus an additional serving of low fat yogurt or cheese. Limit juices, soft drinks, candy and chips. These are all “empty calories”. Encourage plenty of water particularly on hot days.

### **Oral Health**

Ideally children should brush their teeth after every meal. They should also be taught to floss their teeth daily. Visits to the dentist should be every six months.

### **Healthy Safe Habits**

It is best to encourage healthy habits in the beginning. Children should be taught the importance of hand hygiene – washing hands before meals after bathroom use and after coughing and sneezing.

Ensure adequate sleep, eight to twelve hours daily is the average amount for most children.

Promote physical activity, thirty to sixty minutes of exercise daily.

Limit sun exposure and always put sun block on your child.

Tick checks should be performed every night in warmer weather.

A child sixty (60) pounds or less should remain in a car booster seat. Never place a child in the front seat of the car.

A helmet should be worn during bicycling, scooter riding, skating or skiing.

Keep cigarettes, matches, poisons, alcohol and electrical tools locked up.

Gun safety should be reinforced, ask parents of playmates if there is a gun in the house. Guns should be kept unloaded and locked up or removed from the home.

Teach you child stranger safety. Children should know their phone number and address. They should be taught to never go with anyone they do not know.

Television and computer usage should be limited to less than 2 hours per day.

Internet activities should be in a room where parents can monitor activity.

Parents should know what their children are doing and whom they are talking to.

### **Sexual Education**

Expect your child to have normal curiosity. They will ask questions. Always use anatomical terms and explain to them that certain body parts are private.

As children start puberty it is important to start education, this is usually around ten years of age. The Care and Keeping of You – American Girl Library is a nice book for girls in preparing for puberty.

## **Discipline**

It is very important to praise your child's good behavior. Set limits, be consistent and establish consequences. Encourage your child to talk about feelings and activities. Assign chores and start teaching responsibility. Set reasonable expectations. The following are some good resources for behavior:

- Raising Your Spirited Child  
By: Mary Sheedy Kurcinka
- Positive Discipline  
By: Jane Nelson
- Touchpoints: Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development:  
Birth – Three: The Essential Reference for the Early Years  
By: T. Berry Brazelton
- The Explosive Child  
By: Ross W. Greene
- Normal Children Have Problems, Too  
By: Stanley Turecki, Sarah Wernich
- 1, 2, 3 Magic Effective Discipline for Children 2 – 12  
By: Thomas Phelan, Ph.D.

For more information about child health, safety and parenting visit the American Academy of Pediatrics' web site @ [WWW.AAP.ORG](http://WWW.AAP.ORG)