

Caring for your 4-year-old child

Name _____ Weight _____ Height _____ Date _____

Keep Your Child Safe

Use a Booster Seat in the back seat facing forward until your child weighs 60 pounds or his head is higher than the back of the seat. Then use the seat belt.

Use it properly

Prevent**Drowning**

- Teach your child how to swim.
- Never leave him alone while taking a bath.
- Learn child cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Prevent**Burns**

- Protect your child from sunburn. Use sunscreen.
- Keep your child away from hot stoves, hot liquids and hot pots.
- Set the water heater thermostat so that the water is not hotter than 120°F.

Prevent**Poisoning**

- Lock all poisons (medicines, pest killers, paints, cleaning agents) out of reach and sight of your child.

Prevent**Other****Injuries**

- Teach your child to respect animals and other living things.
- Make sure an adult is always watching your child.
- Make your home child-safe (see our "[Child-Proofing Checklist](#)").
- Make your child wear a helmet when using a tricycle, bike or in-line skates.
- Make sure you have smoke detectors on your ceiling. Check twice a year to make sure they work.
- Teach your child about pedestrian and playground safety. Watch all play near streets and driveways.
- Lock or remove the door of any unused refrigerator, freezer, or ice chest.
- Teach your child his name, address and phone number.
- Teach her not to follow or accept gifts or care rides from strangers.
- **Never shake, toss or hit your toddler.** Make sure other caregivers (like day care providers, aunts and uncles) don't either.

Provide Healthy Nutrition

- Feed your child at family mealtimes. Give her 2 nutritious snacks per day, but don't use them as rewards. Nutritious snacks are low in fat and sugar and high in fiber (like most fruits).
- Offer her nutritious foods and let her decide what and how much to eat. You choose the menu; do not let her dictate it. Avoid soft drinks and switch to low-fat milk.
- Eat healthy foods yourself. Show that mealtime is enjoyable and not rushed.

Practice Healthy Parenting and Care-giving

Care for Yourself

Make some time for your self each week by letting someone else care for child.

Remember the Family

- Try to set aside special time for other important people in your life.
- Talk with your sex partner about birth control. Ask yourselves, “How many children can we care for?”

Encourage Healthy Development

- Encourage your child socially. Sing together. Encourage him to explore and play with other children. Enroll him in pre-school. Limit television and videos to one hour per day. Watch programs together and discuss them.
- Excite his mind. Read stories and rhymes with him. Help him use words to express feelings. Go to a museum and get him a library card.
- Help her be stronger and more coordinated. Take her to a park or play ground regularly. Be physically active yourself! Let her create things with paper, glue and child’s scissors.
- Encourage his self-confidence and self-respect. When dressing, eating and playing, offer choices that are okay with you. Never yell at him. Listen to him and answer his questions honestly. Spend individual time with him doing something you both enjoy.
- Teach about sex and private parts. Answer questions about “where babies come from.” Use correct words for genitalia (like “penis” and “labia”).

Encourage Healthy Behaviors

- Children need structure. Create a schedule for her day and try to keep to it. As a family, create a few rules that apply to everyone. Enforce these rules consistently.
- Help him learn to calm or quiet himself.
- Teach your child that violence (like hitting, biting and kicking others, or breaking things) is not okay. Show your 4-year-old how to cooperate. Praise her for healthy behavior. See our “Encouraging Good Behavior” handout.
- Use discipline as a way of teaching and protecting your child, not punishing him.

Encourage Self Care

- Your child needs a regular bedtime, and may need a nap each day. Help him sleep through the night in his own bed.
- Help her brush her teeth at least daily. Use toothpaste with fluoride. Take her to see a dentist.
- Discourage him from regularly sucking his thumb or fingers.
- Teach your child that her private parts can only be touched with her permission. Tell her to report unwanted touching right away.

Prevent Sickness—Identify and Treat It Early

- Learn how to find quickly the Poison Control Center telephone number. It is on the inside cover of the phone book. Keep syrup of ipecac in your home.
- Keep your child away from cigarette smoke. Don’t smoke when he is in the car. Don’t smoke in the home.
- Call the clinic right away if your child is coughing a lot or may be dehydrated. Use acetaminophen or ibuprofen for children to treat fever or minor injuries. A dehydrated child is much less active than usual, or has dry lips and a pasty mouth.

Your child’s next visit is when he is about 5-years-old. Bring his immunization (shot) record with you.