

Caring for Your 3-Year-Old Child

Keep Your Child Safe

Name _____ Weight _____ Height _____ Date _____

Use a Car Seat

- Install it properly in the back seat facing backward.

Prevent Drowning

- Don't leave your toddler alone around water.
- Learn child cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- Empty buckets, tubs and small pools as soon as you are done using them.

Prevent Burns

- Protect your toddler from sunburn. Use sunscreen.
- Keep your toddler away from hot stoves, fireplaces, irons, curling irons, and space heaters.
- 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 toddler.
- Tell your health care provider if you have peeling paint in your home.

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").
- If your child is on a bike with you, make him wear a helmet.
- Make sure you have smoke detectors on your ceiling. Check twice a year to make sure they work.
- Teach your child about pedestrian safety. Teach her not to talk to strangers.
- Lock or remove the door of any unused refrigerator, freezer, or ice chest.
- Teach your child his name, address and phone number.
- Make sure playground equipment is not over 3 feet tall and not made of wood
- **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 toddler at family mealtimes. Give her 2 to 3 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).**
- **Let your child feed himself.**
- **Offer her nutritious foods but let her decide how much to eat. You choose the menu; do not let her dictate it.**

Practice Healthy Parenting and Care-giving

Care for Yourself

- Make some time for yourself each week by letting someone else care for the 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 toddler socially. Sing together. Encourage him to explore and play with other children. Look for pre-schools. Limit television and videos to one hour per day.
- Excite his mind. Read stories and rhymes with him. Help him use words to express feelings. Go to a library or a museum, but don't go too long.
- Help her be stronger and more coordinated. Take her to a park or play ground where she can run, jump and climb. 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.
- 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

- Toddlers 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 them consistently.
- Your 3-year-old is naturally self-centered. Do not expect her to share or take turns easily. Praise her for healthy behavior. See our "Encouraging Good Behavior" handout.
- 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.
- Use discipline as a way of teaching and protecting your toddler, 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.
- Encourage toilet training when your child is ready.

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 toddler is coughing a lot or may be dehydrated. Use acetaminophen or ibuprofen for children to treat fever or minor injuries. A fever is an oral temperature of 100.4°F or higher. A dehydrated child has fewer than five wet diapers a day, is much less active than usual, or has dry lips and a pasty mouth.

Your child's next visit is when he is about 4-years-old. Please bring her immunization (shot) record with you.