

Caring for Your 4-Year-Old Child

Keep Your Child Safe

Name _____ Weight _____ Height _____ Date _____

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.

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 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 child socially. Sing together. Encourage him to explore and play with other children. Enroll him in pre-schools. 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.