

Well Child Care at 6 Years

Nutrition

Having many or most meals together as a family is desirable. Mealtime is a great time to allow the child to tell you of her day, interests, concerns, and worries. Encourage your child to talk and listen to others at the table.

Balance good nutrition with what your child wants to eat. Major battles over what your child wants to eat are not worth the emotional cost. Bring only healthy foods home from the grocery store. Choose snacks wisely. Children should drink soda pop only rarely. Low-fat or skim milk is usually a healthier choice.

Good table manners take a long time to develop. Model table manners for your child.

Development

Your child will grow at a slow but steady rate over the next 2 years. See your child's doctor if your child has a rapid gain in weight or has not gained weight for more than 4 months.

Kids can start to develop lifelong interests in sports, arts and crafts activities, reading, and music. Encourage participation in activities. Remember that the goal of competition is to have fun and develop oneself to the greatest capacity. Winning and losing should receive limited attention. Physical skills vary widely in this age group. Find activities that best fit your child's skills, such as endurance (running), power (swimming), or excellent visual skills (baseball or softball).

Get involved in your child's school and stay aware of how your child is doing. If your child is struggling, meet with the teacher, counselor, or principal.

Behavior Control

- Kids at this age may take risks. Although they confidently think they will not get hurt, parents should watch them closely, especially when they are near roadways, open water, or near a fire or electricity.
- Kids seem to have boundless energy. Prepare in advance for ways to let your child enjoy physical activity.
- Dawdling is a normal response at this age and demonstrates that a child is having a difficult time planning and thinking through the steps of accomplishing a task.
- Adults play important roles in the life of children at age 6. Children will develop close relationships with teachers. It can be upsetting to a child when adults they love (including parents and teachers) go through difficult times or changes.

Reading and Electronic Media

Read to your child on a daily basis. Make reading a part of the nighttime ritual.

Limit electronic media (TV, DVDs, or computer) time to 1 or 2 hours per day of high quality children's programming. Participate with your child and discuss the content with them.

Dental Care

- Your child should brush his teeth at least twice a day and should have regular visits to the dentist.
- Check your child's teeth after he has brushed.

- Flossing the teeth before bedtime is recommended.
- Permanent teeth may soon come in or may have already started coming in.

The grooves on the permanent teeth are prone to cavities. Parents and dentists need to watch the teeth carefully. Sealants (plastic coatings that adhere to the chewing surface of the molar teeth) may help prevent tooth decay. Ask your child's dentist about this.

Safety Tips

Fires and Burns

- Practice a home fire escape plan.
- Keep a fire extinguisher in or near the kitchen.
- Tell your child about the dangers of playing with matches or lighters.
- Teach your child emergency phone numbers and to leave the house if fire breaks out.
- Turn your water heater to 120°F (50°C).

Falls

- Do not let your child use outdoor trampolines.
- Make sure windows are closed or have screens that cannot be pushed out.

Car Safety

- Everyone in a car must always wear seat belts or be in an appropriate booster seat.
- Don't buy motorized vehicles for your child.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety

- Supervise street crossing. Your child may start to look in both directions, but is not ready to cross a street alone.
- All family members should ride with a bicycle helmet.
- Do not allow your child to ride a bicycle near busy roads.
- Children who ride bicycles that are too big for them are more likely to be in bicycle accidents. Make sure the size of the bicycle your child rides is right for your child. Your child's feet should both touch the ground when your child stands over the bicycle. The top tube of the bicycle should be at least 2 inches below your child's pelvis.

Strangers

- Discuss safety outside the home with your child.
- Be sure your child knows her home address, phone number and the name of her parents' place(s) of work.
- Remind your child never to go anywhere with a stranger.

Smoking

- Children who live in a house where someone smokes have more respiratory infections. Their symptoms are also more severe and last longer than those of children who live in a smoke-free home.
- If you smoke, set a quit date and stop. Set a good example for your child. If you cannot quit, do NOT smoke in the house or near children.
- Teach your child that even though smoking is unhealthy, he should be civil and polite when he is around people who smoke.

Immunizations

Your child may already be current on all recommended vaccinations.

An annual influenza shot is recommended for children up until 18 years of age.

Next Visit

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that your child's next routine check-up be at 7 years of age. Bring your child's shot card to all visits.

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Pediatric Advisor 2012.1 published by [RelayHealth](#).

Last modified: 2011-06-23

Last reviewed: 2011-09-20

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