

Child's Well Visit, 4 Years: Care Instructions

Your Care Instructions

Your child probably likes to sing songs, hop, and dance around. At age 4, children are more independent and may prefer to dress themselves.

Most 4-year-olds can tell someone their first and last name. They usually can draw a person with three body parts, like a head, body, and arms or legs.

Most children at this age like to hop on one foot, ride a tricycle (or a small bike with training wheels), throw a ball overhand, and go up and down stairs without holding onto anything. Your child probably likes to dress and undress on his or her own. Some 4-year-olds know what is real and what is pretend but most will play make-believe. Many four-year-olds like to tell short stories.

Follow-up care is a key part of your child's treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if your child is having problems. It's also a good idea to know your child's test results and keep a list of the medicines your child takes.

How can you care for your child at home?

Eating and a healthy weight

- Encourage healthy eating habits. Most children do well with three meals and two or three snacks a day. Start with small, easy-to-achieve changes, such as offering more fruits and vegetables at meals and snacks. Give him or her nonfat and low-fat dairy foods and whole grains, such as rice, pasta, or whole wheat bread, at every meal.
- Check in with your child's school or day care to make sure that healthy meals and snacks are given.
- Do not eat much fast food. Choose healthy snacks that are low in sugar, fat, and salt instead of candy, chips, and other junk foods.
- Offer water when your child is thirsty. Do not give your child juice drinks more than one time a day.
- Make meals a family time. Have nice conversations at mealtime and turn the TV off. If your child decides not to eat at a meal, wait until the next snack or meal to offer food.
- Do not use food as a reward or punishment for your child's behavior. Do not make your children "clean their plates."
- Let all your children know that you love them whatever their size. Help your child feel good about himself or herself. Remind your child that people come in different shapes and sizes. Do not tease or nag your child about his or her weight, and do not say your child is skinny, fat, or chubby.
- Limit TV or video time to 1 to 2 hours a day. Research shows that the more TV a child watches, the higher the chance that he or she will be overweight. Do not put a TV in your child's bedroom, and do not use TV and videos as a babysitter.

Healthy habits

- Have your child play actively for at least 30 to 60 minutes every day. Plan family activities, such as trips to the park, walks, bike rides, swimming, and gardening.
- Help your child brush his or her teeth 2 times a day and floss one time a day.
- Do not let your child watch more than 1 to 2 hours of TV or video a day. Check for TV programs that are good for 4 year olds.
- Put a broad-spectrum sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) on your child before he or she goes outside. Use a broad-brimmed hat to shade his or her ears, nose, and lips.
- Do not smoke or allow others to smoke around your child. Smoking around your child increases the child's risk for ear infections, asthma, colds, and pneumonia. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.

Safety

- For every ride in a car, secure your child into a properly installed car seat that meets all current safety standards. For questions about car seats and booster seats, call the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration at 1-888-327-4236.
- Make sure your child wears a helmet that fits properly when he or she rides a bike.
- Keep cleaning products and medicines in locked cabinets out of your child's reach. Keep the number for Poison Control (1-800-222-1222) near your phone.
- Put locks or guards on all windows above the first floor. Watch your child at all times near play equipment and stairs.
- Watch your child at all times when he or she is near water, including pools, hot tubs, and bathtubs.
- Do not let your child play in or near the street. Children younger than age 8 should not cross the street alone.

Immunizations

Flu immunization is recommended once a year for all children ages 6 months and older.

Parenting

- Read stories to your child every day. One way children learn to read is by hearing the same story over and over.
- Play games, talk, and sing to your child every day. Give him or her love and attention.
- Give your child simple chores to do. Children usually like to help.
- Teach your child not to take anything from strangers and not to go with strangers.
- Praise good behavior. Do not yell or spank. Use time-out instead. Be fair with your rules and use them in the same way every time. Your child learns from watching and listening to you.

Getting ready for kindergarten

Most children start kindergarten between 4½ and 6 years old. It can be hard to know when your child is ready for school. Your local elementary school or preschool can help. Most children are ready for kindergarten if they can do these things:

- Your child can keep hands to himself or herself while in line; sit and pay attention for at least 5 minutes; sit quietly while listening to a story; help with clean-up activities, such as putting away toys; use words for frustration rather than acting out; work and play with other children in small groups; do what the teacher asks; get dressed; and use the bathroom without help.
- Your child can stand and hop on one foot; throw and catch balls; hold a pencil correctly; cut with scissors; and copy or trace a line and circle.
- Your child can spell and write his or her first name; do two-step directions, like "do this and then do that"; talk with other children and adults; sing songs with a group; count from 1 to 5; see the difference between two objects, such as one is large and one is small; and understand what "first" and "last" mean.

When should you call for help?

Watch closely for changes in your child's health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You are concerned that your child is not growing or developing normally.
- You are worried about your child's behavior.
- You need more information about how to care for your child, or you have questions or concerns.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **W873** in the search box to learn more about **"Child's Well Visit, 4 Years: Care Instructions."**

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