In this letter you’ll find helpful resources and learn about:

• How to prepare for your child’s next well-child visit.
• Protecting your child from serious diseases.
• Introducing new foods to your child.
• How to help your child solve problems.
• Hand washing.
• Choosing a preschool.

• Complementary medicines.
• Leading by example.
• Safe gun storage.
• Fire safety and preventing burns.
• Helmet and water safety.
• Happy reading!

Well-Child Visits

Your child may need a checkup

Most doctors recommend a checkup at 2½ years. Ask your doctor or clinic if you should make an appointment.

This is a good time to ask questions about your child’s development. Make sure your child also sees a dentist once a year. Check with your insurance company to find out how many dental visits are covered each calendar year.

Immunizations

Protect your child

Immunizations are the most important way to protect your child against serious diseases. Be sure your child meets the requirements for child care and preschool by getting all the recommended vaccines. If he or she hasn’t received all of the recommended vaccines, now is a great time to get caught up. Children may be required to stay home from child care or preschool during a disease outbreak if they’re not up to date.

It’s also important for you, other household members, and people who care for your child to be up to date on immunizations. Ask your doctor or nurse about immunizations recommended for adults. Consider these questions:

• Do you get a flu shot every year?
• Have you had the whooping cough (Tdap) shot?
• Do you have your own immunization record?
• Are your child care providers vaccinated?

For more information on recommended vaccines, visit [cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules). Talk to your doctor or nurse about your immunization questions, including vaccine safety and effectiveness and myths, or visit the Washington State Department of Health at [doh.wa.gov/immunization](http://doh.wa.gov/immunization). Sign up to get access to your and/or your family’s official immunization records online at [wa.myir.net](https://wa.myir.net).

Growth and Development

Help your child solve problems

Show your child how you expect him or her to behave. This will help your child learn to control his or her own behavior. It will also help teach how actions affect others. For example, if your child throws a toy:

1. Show how he or she can play with the toy. Say, “This is one way to play with the toy and be safe. Can you play with the toy like this?”
2. Give your child a chance to play with the toy safely. If he or she keeps throwing it, suggest another toy. Say, “I can see that you want to throw. Let’s put away these toys and get a ball we can throw.”

Hand washing: do it right and do it often!

Germs that cause illnesses can pass from your child’s hands to his or her mouth. Teach your child to cough or sneeze into the bend of his or her elbow, instead of into his or her hands. It’s important to always wash your child’s hands at these times:

• Before eating
• After he or she coughs or sneezes
• After using the toilet
• After playing outside or with pets
• After coming home from child care or preschool

Wash your hands with your child to show him or her that it’s important. Watch to be sure your child does a good job.

Here are some hand washing tips:

• Use regular soap and warm water. Antibacterial soap is not recommended. Only use hand sanitizers if soap and water are not available.
• Wash for about 20 seconds. (Sing “Happy Birthday” all the way through to make sure you’ve washed long enough.)
• Rinse hands well and dry.

Nutrition and Physical Activity

Help your child learn to eat new foods

Be patient while your child finds out what foods he or she likes. Offer a variety of healthy foods and let your child choose from them. He or she may like a food this week and refuse it next week. Your child may like foods prepared a certain way, such as applesauce instead of apple slices.

At mealtime, include at least one healthy food you know he or she likes. Visit [bit.ly/2qtbRfS](https://bit.ly/2qtbRfS) for healthy tips for picky eaters.

Don’t force your child to eat, reward him or her for eating, or punish him or her for not eating. Making your child eat a food he or she doesn’t want will not teach your child to like it. If your child says he or she has finished a meal, let him or her stop eating. Children usually know when they have had enough. Wait until snack time to offer more food. Offer snacks with balanced nutrition, such as fruits, vegetables, protein, and grains.

Try to make meals a pleasant family time. Plan to eat together at least once a day. Talk with your child about what he or she did during the day. Ask about his or her favorite part of the day.
School Readiness

Find a preschool
If you choose to send your child to preschool, it’s important to start looking now for one that both you and your child like. There are many different kinds of programs from which to choose. Here are a few things to do to help you decide:

• Make a list of the most important things to both you and your child and take it with you.
• Visit more than one preschool, talk to staff, and watch a class. Talk with other parents at the schools.
• Take your child to visit your final choices. Let him or her help make the decision, if possible.

Visit childcareawarewa.org/families for more information on choosing the right preschool for your family.

Family Support and Routines

Complementary medicine
Tell all your child’s healthcare providers about any complementary health approaches (naturapathy, chiropractic, homeopathy, etc.) your child uses. Each provider should be aware of everything you do to do to manage your child’s health. This will help you get the best and safest care for your child.

Be careful when choosing vitamins and herbal supplements. They don’t go through the same testing as medicines do before going to market and are not tested for safety or effectiveness in children. Your child may react differently than an adult would to these products.

For information on talking to your healthcare provider about using complementary health products and practices, visit nccih.nih.gov/health/decisions.

Your child learns from watching you
What you do is just as important as what you say. As a parent, you teach your child many things by talking to him or her. However, your child also learns from watching and copying you and other family members.

Practice healthy habits, such as getting regular exercise and not watching too much TV. Make sure your child sees you brush your teeth daily. Encourage healthy eating by eating nutritious foods yourself. If you smoke, now is a great time to stop. For information about quitting, call 1-800-QUITNOW (784-8669) or visit quitline.com or doh.wa.gov/smartquit.

Safety

Lock up guns
All children, even toddlers, are in danger if they play with guns. If you have guns at home, unload them. Store them in a gun safe or lock box. Lock up bullets separately. Keep lock box keys where children cannot get them. Find out if your child’s other caregivers own guns. Make sure they are stored safely. For safe gun storage information visit lokitup.org.

Keep matches and lighters out of reach
Young children are curious about fire. Children as young as two can start fires and hurt themselves if they play with matches and lighters. If you have lighters and matches at home, keep them out of your child’s reach and out of sight. Remember, even though you tell your child to stay away from stoves, fireplaces, and barbecue grills, you need to watch to make sure he or she does.

Start the helmet habit early
Help your child get in the habit of wearing a helmet whenever he or she rides a toy with wheels or on the back of your bike. If you ride a bike, wear a helmet, too. Your child learns from watching you.

Closely watch your child in and around water
Children can drown in as little as two inches of water. They can slip away and go underwater quickly and quietly. An adult must always be within arm’s reach whenever a toddler is in or around water. Talk with your doctor or nurse about swimming lessons for your child. But remember, even if your child has been in a water skills class, he or she can still drown.

Always stay with your child whenever he or she is in the bathroom or taking a bath. Empty wading (kiddie) pools when you’re not using them; keep garbage cans covered; and put fences around pools, hot tubs, and ponds. If a gate is needed, it should close and latch by itself.

Make sure your child wears a life jacket when playing in or near water; on a dock; or in a boat, raft, or inner tube. Set a good example and wear a life jacket yourself. Swim where there is a lifeguard on duty whenever you can. Learn child CPR. Call your local fire station for classes. For more information on water safety and drowning prevention for all ages visit seattlechildrens.org/dp.

Referrals
• Immunization schedules: cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules
• Vaccine questions: doh.wa.gov/immunization
• Online immunization records: wa.myir.net
• Tips for picky eaters: bit.ly/2qsbRFS
• Find a preschool: childcareawarewa.org/families
• Complementary health: nccih.nih.gov/health/decisions
• Tobacco Quitline: 1-800–QUITNOW (784–8669) and quitline.com
• Tobacco cessation app: doh.wa.gov/smartquit
• Firearm safety: lokitup.org
• Water safety: seattlechildrens.org/dp

Thanks for reading! Share this letter with other caregivers in your child’s life. You’ll hear from us again before your child is three years old with information on:

• Creating a media use plan.
• CPR.
• Your child’s emotions.

For the Health of All Our Children
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