Immunizations

Make sure your child’s immunizations are up to date

In addition to a yearly flu shot, your child will be due for booster doses of other vaccines between four and six years. Talk to your child’s doctor or nurse if you have questions about vaccines or the recommended schedule. Bring your child’s Lifetime Immunization Record and Childhood Health Record to every visit. Be sure your child’s immunizations are up to date and recorded accurately. You will need your child’s immunization record when you register for preschool and child care. Access you and your family’s immunization information online at wa.myir.net.

Nutrition and Physical Activity

Help your child eat well

Your job is to offer your child a variety of healthy foods. Your child’s job is to choose how much of those foods to eat. Here are some tips:

- Set regular meal and snack times. Offer healthy snacks in the morning and afternoon. Fruits and vegetables are good choices. Include protein and grains in snacks, too. (Be careful of small, hard foods that can cause choking.)
- Offer at least one cup of vegetables and fruit a day.
- Offer water when your child is thirsty between meals and snacks. Fluoridated water is best. Limit fruit juice. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than 4 ounces (½ cup) of 100 percent juice a day.
- Avoid sodas and sweet drinks. They may spoil your child’s appetite at mealtime and can cause cavities. Learn more about feeding your child at choosemyplate.gov/health-and-nutrition-information.

Different ways to comfort your child

There are many reasons why your child may get unhappy or upset other than being hungry. If you offer food or drink to comfort your child when he or she is upset it may lead to an unhealthy habit of overeating. If he or she recently ate a meal or snack, think about other things that may be bothering your child besides hunger. Your child may be bored, tired, sick, or want your attention. Try these ideas instead of food:

- Snuggle up with each other and talk or read a book.
- Go for a walk together.
- Turn on some music and dance. Be silly together!

Calcium and vitamin D are important

Calcium and vitamin D help build healthy bones and teeth. Four servings of milk, cheese, or yogurt a day give your child enough calcium. A serving is one slice of cheese or ½ cup of low-fat milk or yogurt. Other good sources are tofu made with calcium sulfate and calcium-fortified soy milk or orange juice. Vitamin D helps your child’s body use calcium. The recommended allowance is 600 IU of vitamin D a day for children over one year. Your child may not get enough vitamin D each day from food as few foods contain vitamin D naturally. Look for dairy products with added vitamin D. Talk to your doctor or nurse about whether your child needs a vitamin D supplement.

Growth and Development

Growth spurts

It’s normal for children to grow faster some months than others. During growth spurts, your child may eat more than usual. Most children get taller and thinner, and gain weight more slowly at this age. If you wonder whether your child weighs too much or too little or see changes that worry you, talk to your child’s doctor, nurse, or a dietitian.

Children learn and develop at their own rate

Most children this age can:

- Hold a crayon between the thumb and fingers.
- Kick and throw a ball.
- Understand simple directions.
- Take turns in games.
- Dress and undress themselves.

By now, people outside your family should be able to understand what your child says at least half the time. If you have questions about your child’s development or speech, talk with your doctor or nurse. You can also call your local school district or the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588 to ask about a free screening.

Pretend play is part of learning

When your child plays make-believe he or she learns many things, such as how to care about other people when pretending to be someone else. When your child makes up stories, he or she learns how to be creative. Your child even learns how to handle feelings and solve problems.

Talk with your child

Talking together is one of the best activities for you and your child. “Why?” is probably one of your child’s favorite words. He or she thinks you know everything! You may get tired of answering the same questions over and over, but...
taking time to talk with your child is very important. Listen to your child’s ideas and stories to find out what he or she is thinking and understanding. Knowing that you listen when he or she talks to you now may make it easier for your child to come to you with problems as he or she gets older.

Child Care and School Readiness

Stay involved in preschool and child care
If your child is going to preschool, stay involved to help make sure he or she has a good experience. Here are some tips:

- Meet regularly with your child’s teachers and ask questions about how he or she is doing.
- Offer to volunteer.
- Join in on special events, such as field trips and holidays.

Ask your child’s teacher or child care provider about songs or rhymes they use for daily activities, such as tooth brushing, clean-up, or naptime. Try singing the song or saying the rhyme for the same activities at home. Making connections between school and home routines builds a strong foundation for learning.

Safety

Fire safety
Create an escape plan so everyone knows how to get out of the house in case of a fire. There should be two ways out of every room. Make sure your child knows what your smoke alarm sounds like. Visit www.safekids.org/start-safe-fire-resources-parents for more information.

Protect your child in or near water
A child can drown quickly and silently in a tub, pool, river, lake, canal, or the ocean.

Swimming and water safety are important skills for your child and family to learn. Even if your child has had lessons, he or she is not old enough to be around water unless an adult is within arm’s length every minute. If you do not know how to swim, take the time to learn. Learning to swim is fun and great exercise for the whole family. Put a life jacket on your child whenever he or she is near or on the water. Use a Coast Guard-approved life jacket made for your child’s weight. Adjust the straps to fit snugly. Washington State law requires all children under 13 to wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket on boats less than 19 feet.

Protect your child at home
Your child may seem very grown up now, but does not understand danger or how he or she may hurt him or herself or others. Keep your home safe and watch your child carefully. Here are some tips to protect your child at home:

- Keep purses, backpacks, and briefcases out of reach as they often have pills, cough drops, nail files, makeup, pocket knives, or lighters in them.
- Put screens in front of the fireplace and space heaters.
- Don’t allow your child to help cook at the stove. When you cook outside, keep your child away from the grill or fire.
- Never use a fuel-burning heater, stove, or grill in your home or in a tent for heat or to cook with.
- Put a non-skid mat in the tub or shower to help prevent falls as most bathtub injuries are due to slips.
- Supervise your child at bath time to prevent drowning and burns from hot water.
- Keep vapor products, e-cigarette liquid, marijuana products (including edibles), and alcohol locked up and out of sight. Teach your kids about the “Not for Kids” logo and place it on any substances that are only for adults. Visit wapc.org for more information.

Lock up poisons
Poisons may look like food or drinks. Teach your child to ask an adult before eating or drinking anything you haven’t given him or her. Here are some tips to keep your child safe:

- Store medicines, vitamins, toothpaste, mouthwash, and household products in original containers and where your child cannot see or reach them.
- Keep marijuana products (including edibles) locked up and out of sight.
- Do not store cleaning products, paint, or gas in used soda, juice, or milk containers.

If you think your child has been poisoned, stay calm and call the Washington Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222. Call 911 if your child has collapsed, has stopped breathing, has trouble breathing, or will not wake up.

Referrals

- Online immunization records: wa.myir.net
- Nutrition resources: choosemyplate.gov/myplate-daily-checklist-preschoolers
- Child development resources: Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588 (TTY 711 TTY relay)
- Fire safety resources: www.safekids.org/start-safe-fire-resources-parents
- Washington Poison Center: 1-800-222-1222 (TTY 711) and wapc.org

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

- Vaccines for parents.
- Helmet safety.
- Getting ready for kindergarten.

For the Health of All Our Children
Child Profile is a program of the Washington State Department of Health

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This publication was made possible, in part, by cooperative agreement #IP000762 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This letter is available in other formats. Call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588 (TTY relay).