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

- Community immunity.
- Healthy food choices.
- Oral health.
- Talking to your child about differences.
- Listening to your child.
- Helping your child with stress.
- Questions about sex.
- Gun safety.
- Teaching your child about 911.

Happy reading!

Immunizations

Community Immunity
Community (or herd) immunity helps slow down or stop the spread of disease among people in a community. It only works when the majority of the population has immunity to the disease. For some diseases, such as measles, at least nine out of ten of us must have immunity to keep the virus from spreading. When you choose to immunize yourself and your family, you also protect others at risk, such as those who:

- Have weak immune systems, such as people with heart disease or cancer.
- Can’t get immunized because they’re too young, too old, or have certain medical conditions preventing them from being vaccinated.

Even though your child has started school, make sure he or she has a well-child visit every year. If your child is not fully immunized, or if you have questions about vaccines, talk to your doctor, nurse, or clinic. For more information, visit doh.wa.gov or call your local health department. To find your local health department visit bit.ly/2gkdS6T. You can also sign up to get access to your and your family’s immunization information online. Go to wa.myir.net.

Nutrition and Physical Activity

Make healthy food choices
Children are healthier and learn better when they eat well. Sitting and eating together as a family can teach your child good eating habits and table manners. Offer children a variety of healthy foods, but don’t ask them to clean their plates. At this age, children are very good at knowing when they are full. Here are some tips:

- Include at least one serving of a fruit or vegetable at every meal or snack. One serving for a child this age is about a ½ cup, the same as half a medium-sized apple or six baby carrots.
- Make a list with your child of his or her favorite foods from each food group. Give your child lots of choices to try new foods, but don’t force him or her to eat them. Remember, your child may need to try a new food many times before he or she likes it.
- Have meals and snacks at regular times. Wait until meal and snack times to offer food. Turn off the TV and mobile devices when it’s time to eat.
- Water and milk are the best drinks for children. If you give your child juice, choose 100 percent juice and offer just 4 to 6 ounces each day. Try to limit giving your child other sugary drinks.

Remember, your child learns best by watching you. Good eating habits are important for the whole family. For more information visit choosemyplate.gov.

Oral Health

Care for your growing child’s teeth
Help your child brush his or her teeth well at least twice a day with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Floss between teeth. Try to avoid giving snacks with sugar and starch. If your child eats a sugary snack, have him or her rinse their mouth with clean water when done. Watch for the permanent six-year molars which may come in now. To prevent cavities, talk with a dentist about getting dental sealants.

For active children, ask the dentist about using a mouth guard to prevent teeth from being damaged or knocked out during sports. This is important as all teeth, including baby teeth and permanent teeth, are needed for speech and to keep other teeth in place. Protect the teeth, jaw, and head from injury by using:

- A car seat or booster seat on every car ride.
- A helmet for active sports, such as bicycling, skateboarding, skating, skiing, and riding a scooter.
- Water and milk are the best drinks for children. If you need to calm down, take a deep breath and count to ten. Try to listen without interrupting.

If a permanent tooth is knocked out, take your child to a dentist within two hours. The tooth can often be reattached. Hold the tooth by the crown (biting side). Rinse it gently in cold water. Do not scrub. Place the tooth in a secure container of cold milk or a wet cloth. Save your dentist’s phone number in your phone or somewhere easy to access in case of emergency.

Growth and Development

Learning about others
As your child gets older and is around more people, he or she will meet children who are not like him or her. They may look or sound different, have different abilities, or be part of other kinds of families or cultures. Help your child understand that every person is unique and special. If you notice your child staring at someone, remember he or she is just being curious. Talk to your child about what he or she sees and answer any questions about the differences he or she notices in others. Encourage your child to make friends with all kinds of people. You’re a role model for your child. Children learn how to treat others by watching you.

Help your child learn to handle strong feelings
You set a good example when you show your child respect as you talk about strong feelings and solving problems. It may be hard to listen to your child when he or she is very angry or upset. When your child is mad at you it’s even more difficult. Listen to your child to help him or her calm down and talk. If you need to calm down, take a deep breath and count to ten. Try to listen without interrupting. Kneel or bend down to your child’s level. Tell your child you want to hear and understand his or her feelings. Then you can find ways to solve the problem together.

Help your child deal with stress
Many things may cause stress, including both happy and sad things. Starting school, family changes (such as a new brother or sister, a move, or a divorce), or broader world events may all be stressful. Learn when your child is feeling stress by noticing changes in how he or she behaves. Your child may:

- Feel sick or cry and whine more often than usual.
- Have temper tantrums or trouble getting along with others.
- Not want to do things he or she usually enjoys.
There are things you can do to help your child cope in any stressful situation. Here are some tips:

- Keep your daily routines the same as much as possible. This helps your child feel safe.
- Talk with your child to find out what he or she is thinking. Help your child understand his or her feelings. This will help him or her learn how to deal with emotions.
- Give your child simple, honest answers. Be sure to answer all questions, but remember, too much information may be scary or confusing.
- Help your child express and release his or her feelings by doing things, such as drawing, playing with dolls or puppets, and being physically active.

**Family Support and Routines**

**Questions about sex are normal**

You may be uncomfortable or worried about how to answer your child’s questions about sex. If you need help, ask your doctor, nurse, or a trusted friend for help and ideas. You can also find tips at [http://bit.ly/2kQmAzB](http://bit.ly/2kQmAzB).

When your child asks you a question about sex or private body parts, keep your answer short and simple. Use the correct words for body parts and try not to seem embarrassed. Find out why your child is asking the question. This may make it easier to answer.

**Safety**

**Gun safety at home**

It’s very hard to keep things hidden from curious children, which is why it’s important to lock up all guns. If you have guns in your home, your child will find them and want to play with them.

Storing guns safely is even more important than teaching your child that guns are dangerous. Here are some tips:

- Always remove bullets from guns.
- Lock up guns and bullets separately.
- Use a locking device, such as a gun safe or lock box.


**Gun safety away from home**

In Washington State, 35 percent of children live in a home with a firearm. An estimated 55,000 of these children live in a household with loaded and unlocked firearms. Before your child goes to other children’s homes, ask the parents about firearms and how they are stored. Ask about guns just as you would ask about other safety issues, such as booster seats or swimming pools. Then decide whether or not to let your child play there. Visit [askingsaveskids.org](http://askingsaveskids.org) for more information.

**Prepare for an emergency**

Begin to teach your child how and when to call 911 in case of an emergency. Here are some tips:

- Use a toy phone and pretend your child is making a call. Help your child practice giving his or her phone number, address, and parents’ full names. Make sure your child knows where cell phones are kept, how to unlock them and how to make a call, especially if there isn’t a landline.
- Make sure your child knows he or she should stay calm and answer all the operator’s questions. Tell your child that help will be on the way even though the operator may continue to ask questions.
- Teach your child not to hang up until the operator says it’s OK.

**Tips for calling 911**

1. **Stay Calm**
   - Speak clearly and don’t talk too fast.
2. **Be Clear**
   - Give your name, location, and type of emergency.
3. **Listen Carefully**
   - to the emergency operator.
4. **Follow Instructions**
   - Do exactly what the operator tells you to do.
5. **Don’t Hang Up**
   - until the operator tells you it’s OK.

Teach your child that 911 is for people emergencies only. (Your child should not call 911 for hurt animals.) Make sure your child knows never to call 911 as a joke or just to see what happens. To learn more about teaching children to use 911, call your local fire department or visit [kidshealth.org/en/parents/911.html](http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/911.html).

**Referrals**

- Immunization information: [doh.wa.gov/immunization](http://doh.wa.gov/immunization)
- Local health departments: bit.ly/2gkdS6T
- Online immunization records: [wa.myir.net](http://wa.myir.net)
- Healthy food options: [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov)
- Talking to your child about sex: [http://bit.ly/2kQmAzB](http://bit.ly/2kQmAzB)
- Safe firearm storage: [lokitup.org](http://lokitup.org)
- Firearm safety devices: [oag.ca.gov/firearms/fsdcertlist](http://oag.ca.gov/firearms/fsdcertlist)
- Asking Saves Kids: [askingsaveskids.org](http://askingsaveskids.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 six years old with information on:

- How to identify sexual abuse.
- Water safety.
- Street and bike safety.

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For the Health of All Our Children

Child Profile is a program of the Washington State Department of Health

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Washington State Department of Health

DOH 920-928 October 2019

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 (711 TTY relay).

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