

## Well Child Care at 10 Years

### Growth and Development

Many girls and some boys have begun to grow at a faster rate at this age. The start of sexual development is normally soon followed by this growth spurt. That is, girl's breasts start to develop and girls and boys start growing genital hair. Girls usually start their sexual development about a year or two earlier than boys.

School achievement is very important for 10-year-olds. Reading, writing, and arithmetic should be the focus of learning. Make sure your child takes responsibility for bringing home schoolwork and has a good place to study at home.

### **Physical Development**

- Physical growth and development varies enormously among this age group.
- Is energetic and spirited.
- Be sure your child gets adequate sleep, suggested bedtimes 8-9 p.m.
- Is usually awkward.
- Strives to be physically fit.
- Is fascinated with how the body works.
- May be curious about drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.
- Continues to revel in bathroom humor.

### **Emotional Development**

- Fluctuates between dependent child and independent pre-teen.
- Becomes increasingly self-conscious.
- Provide personal space (even if limited) for your child at home.



### **Social Development**

- Seeks approval for being "good" from significant people.
- Becomes preoccupied with the opposite sex.
- Begin to teach your child the importance of delaying sexual behavior.
- Related to peer group intensely and abides by group decisions.
- Succumbs to peer pressure more readily.
- Does not want to be "different."
- Continues to participate in small groups of same sex.
- Confides constantly in best friend.

### **Mental Development**

- Is eager to learn and master new skills.
- Is proud of doing things well.
- Is concerned about personal capabilities.
- Has internalized standards of right and wrong to some degree.
- Be sure your child school curriculum includes information on substance abuse and that you discuss the risks at home.

If you have any concerns related to your child's own pattern of development, check with your care provider.

### **Behavior**

10-year-olds have an increasing ability to function without adult supervision at school, on the playground, at home, and in safe community locations. They have learned most social rules and the need for rules. Discuss with your child how he can begin to be responsible for his behavior.

Boys often identify with sports teams and girls with popular-culture icons such as singers or actresses. Although both parents, as always, play an important role in the life of a 10-year-old, the parent of the same gender as the child plays a particularly important role at this time. Despite the attention given to popular culture heroes, role-modeling by parents is very important.

10-year-olds particularly like doing chores. They enjoy hearing from parents that they have done a chore well. It is important for children to begin to think of themselves as capable of accomplishing things. Ask your health care provider for help if your child doesn't believe he can do chores or other tasks.

### **Social Skills**

10-year-olds should be taught to respect the feelings of their peers. They should be responsible for their actions and expect responsible behavior from their friends and peers. The opinions of friends are rapidly becoming very important, perhaps more important than their parent's opinions. It is important to discuss with your child how to make good choices in the company of friends.

Projecting a positive self-esteem is very important at this age. Your child should not always be putting herself down. Ask your health care provider for advice if your child consistently has a poor self-esteem. Supporting and enhancing your child's self-esteem and self-confidence are critical. 10-year-olds who feel good about themselves are better equipped to withstand peer pressure.

Kids want to dress the way their friends dress. This is important for your child and, within reason, you should respect your child's choices. Similarly, your child will want to speak with words that may be unique to their peers, age group, or pop culture. Again, within reason this choice is to be respected.

Spend individual time with her, doing something you both enjoy.

### **Reading**

Reading is very important for 10-year-olds. Be sure to read at every opportunity with your child and discuss the book. Let your child read and tell you stories from books.

### **Television and Electronic Games**

Limit television time to no more than 2 hours per day. Encourage your child to participate in family games and other activities. Carefully select the television programs you allow your child to view. Be sure to watch some of the programs with your child and discuss the show later. Avoid using the television as an electronic babysitter. Do not put a television in your child's bedroom.

Set limits on the amount of time your child plays electronic games.

Your child should not be exposed to shows or games with violent or sexual themes.

### **Sexuality**

Issues about sexuality should be something that you have already begun discussing and that you and your child both feel you can talk about openly. You should occasionally ask your child if he has any other questions about sex. When kids realize that parents feel comfortable with discussing sex, they ask for information more often.

### **Safety**

Accidents are the number one cause of deaths in children. Kids like to take risks at this age but are not well prepared to judge the degree of those risks. Therefore, 10-year-olds still need supervision. Parents should model safe choices.

#### **Car Safety**

- All passengers should always wear lap/shoulder safety belts.
- The lap belt should rest low and snugly across your child's upper thighs, and shoulder belt should rest across shoulder and chest area. The back seat is the safest place for children of any age to ride.

#### **Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety**

- Children at this age will generally cross streets safely. However, be sure that you practice this skill when your child has a new street to cross.
- Make sure your child always uses a helmet when riding a bicycle, skating, skate boarding, or riding a scooter. You can set a good example by always wearing a helmet.
- Your child is not ready for riding on busy streets. Begin to teach your child about riding a bicycle where cars are present.
- Don't buy a bicycle that is too big for your child.

#### **Safety Around Strangers**

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

#### **Guns**

- Be sure guns are unloaded and locked up and that ammunition is stored separately.

### **Dental Care**

Brushing teeth regularly with fluoridated toothpaste after meals is important. Brushing before bedtime is the most important time of all. Make regular appointments for your child to see the dentist.

### **Nutrition**

- Limit high-fat, high-sugar or low nutrient foods and beverages, such as candy, chips, and regular pop.
- Be sure he eats a healthy breakfast.

Next Visit

Your child's next routine check-up should be at 11 years of age.

**Additional Health Resources**

Virtual Children's Hospital – [www.vh.org/vch](http://www.vh.org/vch)

<http://kidshealth.org>

[www.generalpediatrics.com](http://www.generalpediatrics.com)

Credits:

American Academy of Pediatrics; Pediatric Behavioral Health Advisor; Health Informatics

[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

Health Informatics – <http://uiowa.healthinformatics.net>

Bright Futures, DHHS, National Center for Education

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