

Well Child Care at 8 Years

Feeding

With supervision, your child may enjoy helping to choose and prepare the family meals. This will help teach him good food habits. Mealtime should be a pleasant time for the family. Avoid junk foods. Choose meals that have foods from all food groups: meats, dairy products, fruits, vegetables, and cereals and grains. Most children should limit the intake of fatty foods. Children watch what their parents eat, so set a good example.

Teeth

Brushing teeth regularly after meals is important, but it is most important to brush teeth at bedtime. It is also a good idea to make an appointment for your child to see the dentist.

Growth and Development

Growth in height and weight during this year should remain steady. If your child has rapid weight gain or no weight gain, then you need to check with your doctor. Kids usually have a lot of energy at this age. Make sure there is ample opportunity to run and play outdoors.

Physical skills vary widely at age 8. Find activities that fit the physical aptitudes of your child. Ask your doctor for more information about choosing a sport that fits your child's interest and body type. Fine motor skills improve greatly during this age. Children often develop improved writing. Let your child know that you see how he is improving.

A few children still have trouble with wetting the bed at night. Ask your doctor about ways to help this problem.

Physical Development

- Continues to be accident prone, especially on the playground.
- Has more control over small muscles, and therefore writes and draws with more skill.
- Displays a casual attitude toward clothing and appearance.
- Seems to be all hands and arms.
- May agonize over height and weight.

Emotional Development

- Begins to realize others experience similar feelings of anger, fear, and sadness.
- Is easily embarrassed.
- Becomes discouraged easily.

Social Development

- Can be argumentative and bossy.
- Can also be quite lovable and responsive.
- Shows increasing ability to understand the needs and opinions of others.
- Is preoccupied with finding compatible friends.
- Especially likes to belong to more structured adult-led groups such as Scouts.



- Begins to display a sense of loyalty.
- Enjoys secrets.
- Shows some hostility toward the opposite sex.
- No longer wants to assist in household chores.

Mental Development

- Is often idealistic.
- Is keenly interested in projects and collections.
- Is proud of completing tasks.
- Resists adult guidance at times.

Friends and Activities

Finding compatible friends is very important. Children at this age are imaginative and get along well with friends their own age. Your child is beginning to understand that the emotions other experience are similar to his own.

- Talk with your child about both the enjoyable and difficult aspects of friendships.
- Be sure your child has the opportunity to learn about leadership. Group activities allow your child the chance to learn leadership skills.
- Try to keep rules to a minimum. The role of peers in the life of children at this age increases, and children may resist adult authority at times.
- Teach your child to apologize and require that your child help people who have been hurt.

Behavior

Use more encouraging than discouraging words when speaking with your child. Kids have a strong need to feel like they are valued in the family and with their friends.

- Tell your child everyday that you love her.
- Find words that encourage schoolwork and friendships. Tell your child when you notice that he is on time or getting his work done on schedule.
- Keep rules in the house that are fair and consistently enforced.
- Help your child develop a strong sense of right and wrong.
- Don't make demands upon your child that are above his ability.
- Allow your child some choices when alternatives exist.
- Don't allow competition to get out of hand. Allow a child to compete against herself and set personal best records.

The ingredients to build a strong conscience include a warm and caring family, and consistent and firm enforcement of the rules. Model how you wish your child to behave.

Reading

The elementary school years are a period during which parents and children can enjoy reading together. Reading will promote learning in school, too. Make reading a part of the pre-bedtime ritual.

Television and Electronic Games

Limit television and electronic game time to a total of 1 to 2 hours per day. Encourage participation 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. Avoid violent programming and using the television as an electronic babysitter. Do not put a television in your child's bedroom.

Sexuality

It is important to begin discussing sexuality in the home. Children should be asked if they have any questions about sex. At first, they often don't want to talk about sex. Do not impose information on them. Once kids realize that parents feel comfortable with discussing sex, kids will often ask their parents for information.

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, children still need close supervision at this age. Parents should model safe choices in living.

Avoiding Fires and Burns

- Practice a home fire escape plan.
- Check your smoke detector battery once a month.
- Keep a fire extinguisher in or near the kitchen.
- Teach children emergency phone numbers and to leave the house if fire breaks out.

Car Safety

- Make sure everyone in the car wears seat belt.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety

- Crossing busy streets needs to be supervised. Children at this age will generally look in both directions, but they do not reliably look over their shoulders for oncoming cars.
- Make sure your child always uses a bicycle helmet. Model this behavior when you ride a bicycle.
- Your child is not ready for riding on busy streets. However, 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.

Avoid Drowning

- Even children who are good swimmers need to be closely supervised around swimming pools and open water.

Avoiding Falls

- Make sure windows are closed or have screens that cannot be pushed out.
- Do not allow play in areas where a fall could lead to a serious injury.
- Do not allow your child to play on a trampoline unsupervised.

Safety Around Strangers

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

Next Visit

Your child's next routine check-up should be at 9 years of age.

Additional Health Resources

Virtual Children's Hospital – www.vh.org/vch

<http://kidshealth.org>

www.generalpediatrics.com

Credits:

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

www.aap.org

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

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