

## Well Child Care at 6 Years

### Feeding

- Having many or most meals together as a family is desirable. Mealtime is a great time to allow the child to tell you of her day, interests, concerns, and worries.
- Let your child have plenty of opportunity to participate in the discussion at the table.
- Food preferences will vary. You need to balance good nutrition with what your child wants to eat. Major battles over what your child wants to eat are not worth the emotional cost.
- Good table manners take a long time to develop. Model good table manners for your child.

### Teeth

- Your child should brush his teeth regularly and should have regular visits to the dentist.
- Parents need to check their child's teeth after she has brushed.
- Flossing the teeth before bedtime is recommended.
- Permanent teeth may soon come in or may have already started coming in.
- The pits of the permanent teeth are prone to cavities; parents and dentists need to watch the teeth carefully and consider whether sealants (plastic coatings that adhere to the chewing surface of the molar teeth) may help prevent tooth decay.

### Physical Development

Your child will grow at a slow but steady rate over the next 2 years. See your child's care provider if your child has a rapid gain in weight or has not gained weight for more than 4 months.

- Loves active play but may tire easily.
- Can be reckless (does not understand dangers completely).
- Is still improving basic motor skills.
- Is still not well coordinated.
- Begins to learn some specific sports skills like batting a ball.
- Dawdles much of the time.
- Is fascinated with the subject of teeth.
- May become a more finicky eater.
- Uses crayons and paints with small skill, but has difficulty writing and cutting.
- May resist bats.
- Permanent teeth erupting, both front teeth or molars.



### Mental Development

- Likes taking responsibility for simple household chores.
- Likes to make simple decisions.
- Counts to 100.
- Asks endless "how-what-when-where-why" questions.

- Continues to refine concepts of shape, space, time, color, and numbers.
- Begins to understand the difference between intentional and accidental.
- Begins to understand differences of opinion.
- Still has a short attention span (about 15 minutes maximum).
- Enjoys dramatic play.

### **Social Development**

- Evaluates self and friends.
- Begins to impose rules on play activities.
- Cooperates with other children with some difficulty.
- Has difficulty considering the feelings of others.
- Values independence.

### **Emotional Development**

- May have unpredictable mood swings.
- Is quite sensitive to criticism.
- Has a problem admitting a mistake.
- Feels quite guilty about mistakes.

### **Activities**

- Kids can start to develop life long interests in sports, arts, and craft activities, reading, and music.
- Encourage participation in activities. Remember that the goal of competition is to have fun and develop oneself to the greatest capacity. Winning and losing should receive limited attention.
- Physical skills vary widely in the age group. The sports that kids will excel in will vary depending on whether the activity requires endurance (such as, distance running), power (such as, swimming), or excellent visual skills (such as, baseball or softball).

### **Behavior**

- Kids at this age like to take risks. They act confident and think they will not get hurt. Watch them closely, especially when they are near busy roadways, open water, or near a fire or electricity.
- Kids seem to have boundless energy. Prepare in advance for ways to let your child enjoy physical activity.
- Dawdling is a normal response at this age and demonstrates that a child is having a difficult time planning and thinking through the steps of accomplishing a task.
- Adults play important roles in the life of children at age 6. Children will develop close relationships with teachers. It can be upsetting to a child when adults they love (including teachers) go through difficult times or changes.
- Wetting the bed at night is a problem for a few children. If your child still wets the bed regularly, ask the doctor about ways to help decrease this behavior.

### **Safety**

#### **Fires**

- Practice a home fire escape plan.
- Check every month to make sure that smoke detectors are working properly.
- Keep a fire extinguisher in or near the kitchen.
- Tell your child about the danger of playing with matches or lighters.
- Teach your child emergency phone numbers and to leave the house if fire breaks out.
- Turn your water heater to 120 degrees F (50 degrees C).

### **Cars**

- Make sure your child always uses a booster seat until at least 60 lbs and he is tall enough for the car's lap and shoulder belt to be positioned correctly.
- Do not buy motorized vehicles for your child.

### **Pedestrian and Bicycle**

- Supervise street crossing. Your child may start to look in both directions, but don't depend on his ability to cross a street alone yet.
- Buy and use a bicycle helmet for all bicycle riding members of the family.
- Do not allow your child to ride a bicycle near busy roads.
- Children who ride bicycles that are too big for them are more likely to be in bicycle accidents. Your child's feet should both touch the ground when your child stands over the bicycle. The top tube of the bicycle should be at least 2 inches below your child's pelvis.

### **Trampoline**

- Health professional groups advise avoiding the use of outdoor trampolines.

### **Heights**

- Make sure windows are closed or have screens that cannot be pushed out.

### **Strangers**

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

### **Discourage Interest in Tobacco Products**

The unhealthy effects of tobacco are well recognized. Parents are influential in teaching children to avoid tobacco.

- If a parent smokes, the parent should set a quit date and stop smoking. Modeling nonsmoking is a powerful example with important health consequences.
- Talk to your child about smoking and its many harmful effects.

### **Immunizations**

Your child should already be current on all routinely recommended vaccinations. Sometimes influenza shots are recommended at this age depending on your child's health. Be sure to bring your shot record to all visits with your doctor.

### **Next Visit**

Your child's next routine check-up will be at 7 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>