



Children's Healthcare Medical Associates

550 Washington St., Suite 300
San Diego, CA 92103
(619) 297-KIDS • Fax (619) 297-4567
www.childrenshealthcaremedical.com

Well Child Care at 4 Years

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Nutrition

Your child should always be part of the family at mealtime. Family meals at a table are associated with...improved nutrition, school success and less social problems. This should be a pleasant time for the family. Give small portions of food to your child. If he is still hungry, let him have seconds. Selecting foods from all food groups (meat, dairy, grains, fruits, and vegetables) is a good way to produce a balanced diet. Half of your child's plate should be fruit or vegetables or both. Do not give your child sweet drinks (soda, juice, yes even 100% juice, Gatorade, and sweetened teas are all full of sugar and are not recommended.)

The USDA, the agency in charge of nutrition, has switched from the food pyramid to a new symbol: a colorful plate – called MyPlate – with some of the same messages:

Eat a variety of foods.

Eat less of some foods and more of others.

Limit liquids to water and non-fat milk.

The plate is the size of a salad plate and features four sections (vegetable, fruits, grains, and protein) plus a side order of dairy. The big message is that fruits and vegetables take up half the plate, with the vegetable portion being a little bigger than the fruit section. In addition, the plate has been divided so that the grain section is bigger than the protein section. Why? Because nutrition experts recommend you eat more vegetables than fruit and more grains than protein foods.

What are Proteins, Grains and Dairy?

You know what fruits and vegetables are, but here's a reminder about what's included in the three other food groups: proteins, grains, and dairy:

Protein: Beef; poultry; fish; eggs; nuts and seeds; and beans and peas like black beans, split peas, lentils, tofu and veggie burgers. Protein builds up, maintains, and replaces the tissue in your body.

Grains: Bread, cereal, rice, tortillas, and pasta. Whole-grain products such as whole-wheat bread, oatmeal, and brown rice are recommended because they have more fiber and help you feel full.

Dairy: Milk, yogurt, cheese, and fortified soy milk. With MyPlate, the dairy circle could be a cup of milk, but you also can get your dairy servings from yogurt or cheese. Choose low-fat yogurt and cheese and non-fat or 1% milk most of the time. Over a 24 hour period, your child should be taking in 8 to 12 ounces of dairy.

The plate can be used for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. That may make you wonder: Do I really have to eat vegetables with breakfast? The answer is no, but aim to eat a variety of food groups at each meal. And if your breakfast doesn't include a veggie,

consider a vegetable at snack time. Healthy, portion-controlled snacks are still OK.

Eating more fruits and vegetables will help you eat fewer calories overall, which helps you keep a healthy weight.

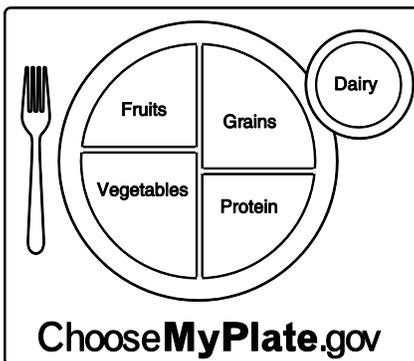
Eating fruits and veggies also gives you lots of vitamins and minerals.

Development and Discipline

At this age children usually become more cooperative in their play with other children. They are curious and imaginative. Allow privacy while your child is changing clothes or using the bathroom. When your child starts wanting privacy on his own, let him know that you think this is good.

Breaking rules occasionally is common at this age. Making children stand in a corner by themselves for 4 minutes is usually an effective punishment. If you have questions about behavior, ask your doctor.

It is important to set rules about television watching. Limit total TV time to ½ to 1 hour per day. Children should not be allowed to watch shows with violence or sexual behaviors. Watch TV with your child and discuss the shows. Find other activities you can do with your child. Reading, hobbies, and physical activities are good alternatives to TV.



Safety Tips

Car Safety

- Never leave your child alone in a car.
- Everyone in a car must always wear seat belts or be in an appropriate booster seat or car seat. While a 4 year old can be in a booster seat by law, it is best to keep them in a 5 point restraint as long as possible.

Falls: *Because your child's abilities are so great now, he will find an endless variety of dangerous situations at home and in the neighborhood. Your child can fall off play equipment, out of windows, down stairs, off a bike or tricycle, and off anything that can be climbed on.*

- Be sure the surface area under play equipment is soft enough to absorb a fall.
- Lock the doors to any dangerous areas.
- Use gates on stairwells.
- Install operable window guards above the first floor.
- Fence in the play yard.

Firearm Hazards: *Children in homes where guns are present are in more danger of being shot by themselves, their friends, or family members than by being injured by an intruder. Hand guns are especially dangerous.*

- Keep guns unloaded and in a locked place.
- Ammunition should be locked and in a separate location from the gun.
- Ask if the homes your child visits or is cared for have guns and how they are stored.

Burns

- Find something safe for your child to do while you are cooking.
- Supervise your child around kitchen appliances and other hot surfaces such as irons, ovens, wall heaters, and outdoor grills. They retain heat and can burn your child long after you have finished using them.
- If your child does get burned, immediately put cold water on the burned area. Keep the burned area in cold water for a few minutes to cool it off, and then cover the burned area loosely with a dry bandage or clean cloth.
- Call your doctor for all burns.
- Be sure to have smoke alarms on every level of your home, especially in furnace and sleeping areas.
- Test the alarms every month.
- Use long-life batteries or change the batteries at least once a year.

Water Safety: *Swimming and playing in water can give your child much pleasure and good exercise. But you must take steps to prevent your child from drowning.*

- Never let your child swim in any body of water without an adult watching.
- Be sure the adult watching your child knows how to swim, get emergency help, and perform CPR.
- Keep a life preserver and shepherd's hook in the pool area to help pull a child to the edge of the pool when necessary.
- Teach your child safety rules and make sure they are obeyed.
 - Never swim alone
 - Never dive into water except when permitted by an adult who knows the depth of the water and who has checked for underwater objects.
 - Always use a life jacket when on a boat, fishing, or playing in a river or stream.
- Caution your child about the risks of drowning during the winter by falling through thin ice.
- Don't let young children and children who cannot swim use inflatable toys or mattresses in water that is above the waist.
- Watch children closely when they are playing near standing water, wells, open post holes, or irrigation or drainage ditches.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety

- Teach your child to never ride a tricycle or bicycle in the street.
- All family members should use a bicycle helmet.
- It is much too early to expect a child to look both ways before crossing the street. Supervise all street crossings.

Poisons

- Teach your child to never take medicines without supervision and not to eat unknown substances.
- Put the poison center number on all phones: 1-800-222-1222

Safety Around Strangers

- Teach your child the first and last names of family members.
- Teach your child never to go anywhere with a stranger.

Avoid Injuries

- Do not allow your child to be near knives, power tools, or mowers.

Dental Care

- Brushing teeth regularly after meals is important. Think of a way to make it fun.
- It is also a good idea to make an appointment for your child to see the dentist.

- If your child sucks his thumb, ask your doctor or dentist for advice on how to help him stop.

Listening to your child read aloud

Once your child begins to read, have him read aloud. This can help build your child's confidence in his ability to read and help him enjoy learning new skills. Take turns reading with your child to model more advanced reading skills.

If your child asks for help with a word, give it right away so that he does not lose the meaning of the story. Do not force your child to sound out the word. On the other hand, if your child wants to sound out the word, do not stop him.

If your child substitutes one word for another while reading, see if it makes sense. If your child uses the word "dog instead of "pup," for example, the meaning is the same. Do not stop the reading to correct him. If your child uses a word that makes no sense (such as road for read), ask him to read the sentence again because you are not sure you understand what has just been read. Recognize your child's energy limits. Stop each session at or before the earliest signs of fatigue or frustration.

Most of all make sure you give your child lots of praise! You are your child's first, and most important, teacher. The praise and support you give your child as he learns to read will help him enjoy reading and learning more.

Television: Reducing the Negative Impact

While TV can be a good teacher, many children watch TV excessively and experience some of the negative consequences described below.

What are the harmful aspects of TV?

1. **TV displaces active types of recreation.**
2. **TV interferes with conversation and discussion time.**
3. **TV discourages reading.**
4. **TV discourages exercise.**
5. **TV advertising encourages a demand for material possessions.**
6. **TV violence can affect how a child feels towards life and other people.**

How do I prevent TV addiction? Avoid TV for children less than 2 years of age.

1. **Encourage active recreation.**
2. **Read to your children.**
3. **Limit TV time.**
4. **Don't use TV as a distraction.**

Immunizations

Your child may receive vaccination shots. After a shot your child may run a fever and become irritable for about 1 day. Your child may also have some soreness, redness, and swelling where a shot was given. For fever, give your child an appropriate dose of acetaminophen. For swelling or soreness, put a wet, warm washcloth on the area of the shot 4 times a day.

Call your child's physician immediately if:

- Your child has a fever over 105°F (40.5°C).
- Your child has a severe allergic reaction beginning within 2 hours of the shot (for example, hives, wheezing or noisy breathing, swelling of the mouth or throat.)
- Your child has any other unusual reaction.

Next Visit: A once-a-year check-up is recommended. Be sure to check your child's shot records before starting school to make sure he or she has all the required vaccinations.