

Lincoln Pediatrics

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Well Child Care at 8 Years

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 should 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 interests 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 or she is improving.

Friends and Activities

Finding compatible friends is very important. Children at this age are imaginative and get along well with friends their own age. They are becoming very concerned about what other kids think about them. They are beginning to understand that the emotions others experience are similar to their own.

- Talk with your child about both the enjoyable and difficult aspects of friendships.
- Teach your child about helping people "save face" when they are angry or embarrassed.
- 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 they have 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 him.
- Find words that encourage schoolwork and friendships. Tell your child when you notice that he is on time or getting her work done on schedule.
- Keep rules 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 choice when alternatives exist.
- Don't allow competition to get out of hand. Allow a child to compete against himself and set personal best records.

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

Reading

The elementary school years are a period 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 Media

Limit TV, computers, and electronic game time to a total of 1 or 2 hours per day. Encourage participation in family games and other activities. Carefully select the 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 TV as an electronic babysitter. Do not put a television in your child's bedroom.

Nutrition

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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 snack 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. Bring healthy foods home from the grocery store.

Sexuality

It is important to begin discussing sexuality. 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 discussing sex, kids will often ask their parents for information. Parents and kids should discuss the values that parents want their children to have about sexuality.

Safety Tips

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.

Avoiding Fires and Burns

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

Car Safety

- Everyone in a car must always wear seat belts or be in an appropriate booster seat.

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.

Avoiding 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 her address and phone number and her parents' place(s) of work.
- Teach your child never to go anywhere with a stranger.

Dental Care

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.

Immunizations

Your child should already be current on all routinely recommended vaccinations. Sometimes influenza or other vaccines are recommended at this age depending on your child's health and where you live. Additional vaccines are also sometimes given when

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children travel outside the country. Ask your doctor if you have any questions about immunizations. Be sure to bring your child's shot record to all visits with your child's doctor.

Next Visit

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that your child's next routine check-up be at 10 years of age.

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