

Lincoln Pediatrics

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Well Child Care at 6 Years

Growth and Development

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

Activities

- Kids can start to develop life long interests in sports, arts and crafts 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 this 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).
- Limit electronic media (TV, DVDs, or computer) time to 1 or 2 hours per day of high quality children's programming. Participate with your child and discuss the content with them.

Behavior

- Kids at this age may take risks. Although they confidently think they will not get hurt, parents should watch them closely, especially when they are near 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 parents and teachers) go through difficult times or changes.

Nutrition

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. Be flexible if your child occasionally needs to eat on the run.

Food preferences will vary. 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. Bring only healthy foods home from the grocery store. Choose snacks wisely.

Good table manners take a long time to develop. Model table manners for your child.

Safety

Fires

- Practice a home fire escape plan.
- Keep a fire extinguisher in or near the kitchen.
- Tell your child about the dangers 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°F (50°C).

Car Safety

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

Well Child Care at 6 Years

Page 2

- Don't buy motorized vehicles for your child.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety

- Supervise street crossing. Your child may start to look in both directions, but is not ready to cross a street alone.
- All family members should ride with a bicycle helmet.
- 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. Make sure the size of the bicycle your child rides is appropriate. 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

Tobacco use is unhealthy. 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. Ask him what he knows about smoking and if he knows anyone harmed by tobacco.
- Tell your child that smoking is related to the cause of death for 1 in every 5 people in the United States.
- Teach your child to be civil and polite when he is around people who smoke. Also teach your child to avoid breathing in other people's smoke.

Dental Care

- Your child should brush his teeth at least twice a day and should have regular visits to the dentist.
- Parents need to check their child's teeth after he has brushed.
- Flossing the teeth before bedtime is recommended.
- Permanent teeth may soon come in or may have already started coming in.
- The grooves on 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.

Immunizations

Your child may 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

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that your child's next routine check-up be at 8 years of age.

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