

Lincoln Pediatrics

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Well Child Care at 3 Years

Nutrition

Mealtime should be a pleasant time for the family. Your child should be feeding himself completely on his own now. Buy and serve healthy foods and limit snack foods. Your child will still have a daily snack. Choose and eat healthy snacks and limit junk food. If you are having problems at mealtime, ask your health care provider for advice.

Development and Discipline

Children at this age often want to do things by themselves; this is normal. Patience and encouragement will help 3-year-olds develop new skills and build self-confidence. Many children still require diapers during the day or night. Avoid putting too many demands on the child or shaming him about wearing diapers. Let your child know how proud and happy you are as toilet training progresses.

For behaviors that you would like to encourage in your child, try to "catch your child being good." That is, tell your child how proud you are when he does what you want him to do. Be positive and enthusiastic when your child does things to please you.

Here are some good methods for helping children learn about rules and to keep them safe:

1. Child-proof the home. Go through every room in your house and remove anything that is either valuable, dangerous, or messy. Preventive child-proofing will stop many possible discipline problems. Don't expect a child not to get into things just because you say no.
2. Divert and substitute. If a child is playing with something you don't want him to have, replace it with another object or toy that the child enjoys. This approach avoids a fight and does not place children in a situation where they'll say "no."
3. Teach and lead. Have as few rules as necessary and enforce them. These rules should be rules important for the child's safety. If a rule is broken, after a short, clear, and gentle explanation, immediately find a place for your child to sit alone for 3 minutes. It is very important that a "time-out" comes immediately after a rule is broken.
4. Make consequences as logical as possible. For example, if you don't stay in your car seat, the car doesn't go. If you throw your food, you don't get any more and may be hungry.
5. Be consistent with discipline. Remember that encouragement and praise are more likely to motivate a young child than threats and fear. Do not threaten a consequence that you do not carry out. If you say there is a consequence for misbehavior and the child misbehaves, carry through with the consequence gently, but firmly.

Safety Tips

Prevent Fires and Burns

- Practice a fire escape plan.
- Check smoke detectors. Replace the batteries if necessary.
- Keep matches and lighters out of reach.
- Turn your water heater down to 120°F (50°C).

Car, Pedestrian, and Play 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.
- Hold onto your child's hand when you are near traffic.
- Do not allow riding of a tricycle or other riding toys on driveways or near traffic.
- All family members should use a bicycle helmet, even when riding a tricycle.
- Practice crossing the street. Make sure your child stays right with you.

Dental Care

- Brushing teeth regularly after meals is important. Think up a game and make brushing fun.
- Make an appointment for your child to see the dentist.

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Prevent Drowning

- Watch your child constantly when he is around any water.

Poisons

- Keep all medicines, vitamins, cleaning fluids, etc. locked away.
- Put the poison center number on all phones.
- Purchase all medicines in containers with safety caps.
- Do not put toxic substances into drink bottles, glasses, or jars.

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 Falls

- Do not allow your child to climb on ladders, chairs, or cabinets.
- Make sure windows are closed or have screens that cannot be pushed out.

Next Visit

A once-a-year check-up is recommended. Before starting kindergarten, your child will need vaccinations.

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