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Well Child Care at 10 Years

Growth and Development

Many girls and a few boys have begun to grow at a faster rate at this age. The start of sexual development is normally soon followed by this growth spurt. Girls usually start their sexual development one or two years earlier than boys.

School achievement is very important for 10-year-olds. Reading, writing, and arithmetic should be the focus of learning. Make sure your child takes responsibility for bringing home schoolwork and has a good place to study at home.

Behavior

10-year-olds have an increasing ability to function without adult supervision at school, on the playground, at home, and in safe community locations. They have learned most social rules and the need for rules. Discuss with your child how he can begin to be responsible for his behavior.

Parents play an important role in the life of a 10-year-old. The parent of the same gender as the child plays a particularly important role at this time. Despite the attention given to popular culture heroes, role-modeling by parents is very important.

10-year-olds particularly like doing chores. They enjoy hearing from parents that they have done a chore well. It is important for children to begin to think of themselves as capable of accomplishing things. Ask your health care provider for help if your child doesn't believe he can do chores or other tasks.

Social skills

10-year-olds should be responsible for their actions and expect responsible behavior from their friends and peers. The opinions of friends are very important, perhaps more important than their parent's opinions. Discuss with your child how to make good choices in the company of friends.

Projecting a positive self-esteem is very important at this age. Your child should not always be putting himself down. Ask your health care provider for advice if your child consistently has a poor self-esteem.

Kids want to dress the way their friends dress. This is important for your child and, within reason, you should respect your child's choices. Similarly, your child will want to speak with words that may be unique to their peers, age group, or pop culture. Again, within reason, this choice is to be respected.

Reading

Reading is very important for 10-year-olds. Be sure to read at every opportunity with your child and discuss the book. Let your child read and tell you stories from books.

Television and Electronic Media

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Encourage your child to participate in family games and other activities. Limit "screen time" (TV, electronic games, computers) to no more than 1 or 2 hours per day. Carefully select the programs you allow your child to view. Be sure to watch and discuss some of the programs with your child. Do not put a television in your child's bedroom.

Your child should not be exposed to shows or games with violent or sexual themes.

Sexuality

Parents and kids should discuss issues of sexuality. You should occasionally ask your child if he has any other questions about sex. When kids realize that parents feel comfortable with discussing sex, they ask for information more often. Discuss sexual values with your child.

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, 10-year-olds still need supervision. Parents should model safe choices.

Car Safety

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

Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety

- Children at this age will generally cross streets safely. However, be sure that you practice this skill when your child has a new street to cross.
- Make sure your child always uses a bicycle helmet. You can set a good example by always wearing a helmet.
- Your child is not ready for riding on busy streets. 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.

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.
- Remind your child never to go anywhere with a stranger.

Dental Care

Brushing teeth regularly after meals is important. Brushing before bedtime is the most important time of all. Make regular appointments for your child to see the dentist.

Follow-Up

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that your child have a routine checkup every year. Be sure to bring your child's shot records to every annual visit.

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