



healthy kids **NOW**



Kids never outgrow regular checkups

Babies need a little more attention from the doctor — even when they’re healthy — than older kids do. In fact, by the time a child is 2 years old, he or she should have had almost a dozen well-child visits.

But even as children grow, well-child visits are still important. Starting at age 3, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a

once-a-year well-child visit. In fact, children should have annual visits from age 3 until age 21.

In addition to making sure your child’s shots are up-to-date, the doctor will also examine your child to see how he or she is developing.

Your child will probably have his or her height, weight, body mass index, and blood pressure checked. He or she also may have hearing

and vision screenings, and may be screened for lead poisoning, anemia, tuberculosis, and high cholesterol.

Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics; Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine; Pediatrics

What should you bring to the doctor’s office?

When you take your child for a checkup, be sure to bring the following items:

- A list of questions or concerns
- A list of prescription and over-the-counter medications your child is taking, in addition to supplements
- A list of the shots your child has received and the approximate dates

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Do your kids spend too much time online?

In this digital age, children have the world at their fingertips. But if your youngsters are spending too much time surfing the Internet, visiting chat rooms, and exchanging emails, it's time to take back the mouse and keyboard.

What if your kids are reluctant to talk about what they're doing on the Internet?

It could be a warning sign that they are visiting inappropriate websites. It might even signal something worse, though. According to one study, almost 20 percent of youth who use the Internet are targets of unwanted sexual advances.

Here are a few strategies to help your kids surf safely online:

- Keep computers in a common room, like the living room.
- Buy software that blocks adult-oriented websites. Check www.attorneygeneral.gov/kidsparents.aspx?id=1663 for a list of common Internet filtering programs.
- Check out what your kids are doing online, and get to know their online friends.
- Set a "screen" time limit to no more than one to two hours a day. This includes TV, computer, video games, and texting time. It can also include telephone time.
- Tell your child not to reveal any personal information to anyone they meet on the Internet.

Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics; Nemours Foundation; Adolescence; Brown University Child & Adolescent Behavior; JAMA



Rules of the road: New car seat guidelines

It was once a rite of passage. On a child's first birthday, mom or dad would turn the car seat around to face forward.

But child safety experts at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) now warn against this practice. Their new guidelines recommend children remain facing the rear as long as possible — until they reach age 2 or the height and weight limit for their seat. That's usually between 30 to 40 pounds.

The AAP has also recommended changes for older children:

- Toddlers and preschoolers ride in forward-facing seats with harnesses until they exceed height and weight limits.
- Then, they should use a booster seat until they reach 4 feet 9 inches tall, usually between ages 8 and 12.
- All children ride in the backseat, with lap and shoulder seat belts buckled, until age 13 to protect against injuries from air bags.



New "advanced" air bags better protect adults, but they're still not safe for young passengers.

Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics; Automotive Safety Program; National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; Safe Kids USA; Tempe Fire Department; Pediatrics

For kids, “unleaded” is best



About 250,000 U.S. children have lead levels greater than 10 micrograms per deciliter of blood. That's the point at which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention feels public health action is needed. What's more, the latest research shows that even low levels of lead in the blood may affect a child's physical and mental development. Among problems blamed on just a small amount of lead: learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, decreased muscle and bone growth, and behavioral trouble.

In other words, there is no “safe” level for lead.

What you can do

How can you protect youngsters? Here are tips from the federal government:

- If you plan to renovate a home built before 1978, have it tested for lead by a professional. Home tests are often unreliable.
- Move out young children and pregnant women while renovating an older home.

- Have children wash their hands after they've been outside, especially if they've been playing in dirt.
- If you buy new mini-blinds, look for ones that have a label that says “new formulation” or “nonleaded formula.”
- Use cold tap water for cooking, drinking, or preparing infant formula — and run the faucet for a few minutes first. Hot water is more likely to contain lead. For added safety, use a filter certified to remove lead.
- Keep kids away from areas where anyone's job or hobby uses lead. Some examples: making pottery, working with stained glass, and welding. People with such activities should shower and change clothes before coming in contact with children.
- Use only cookware, tableware, and food storage containers that

DID YOU KNOW?

Children should be screened for lead with a blood test at 12 months old, and again at 24 months. Many experts suggest continued screening up to ages 4 or 5.

are labeled lead-free.

- Avoid giving children herbal medicines or folk remedies that may contain lead.
- Be aware of lesser-known sources of lead, like some blinds made in other countries, sinkers used for fishing, and some pottery.

Sources: Environmental Health Perspectives; New England Journal of Medicine; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Pediatrics; Journal of the American Academy of Physician Assistants

Visit the National Lead Information Center at www.epa.gov/lead to learn more.

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Not only is September typically when your kids head back to school, it marks some important U.S. nutrition-related health observances: Whole Grains Month, National Cholesterol Education Month, and Fruits and Veggies — More Matters Month.

Teaching your kids proper nutrition and healthy eating habits can help them stay at a healthy weight. Read on to learn how you can make the day's three major meals — breakfast, lunch, and dinner — an even more healthy experience for your kids.

Five tasty tips for a quick, healthy breakfast

It's morning — time to hustle out the door! Who needs breakfast, anyway?

Your kids do! Decades of research have shown the benefits of breakfast. Children who eat breakfast score higher on school exams, are more creative and energetic, and are less likely to be overweight.

With minimal prep time, you can work breakfast into your household's hectic mornings. Just be sure to read labels at the store and buy or make low-fat versions of these foods whenever possible:

1 Toasting is quick and easy. Try toasted bagels or whole-wheat bread topped with fruit spread, cheese, or peanut butter . . . or

multigrain waffles topped with yogurt and fruit.

2 Whole-grain cereals — hot or cold — are convenient and nutritious. Select high-fiber, low-sugar varieties. Add milk and fruit for a complete meal.

3 Combine milk, fruit, and a teaspoon of bran for a calcium-rich morning shake.

4 If your children dislike “typical” breakfast foods, try leftover meatless pizza or sandwiches, such as peanut butter and jelly or turkey and cheese.

5 Have your kids take breakfast with them. Bagels, breakfast bars, and yogurt all travel well. So do crackers, cheese, and grapes.



Nutrition news

MyPlate replaces the government's food pyramid. The underlying dietary guidelines are the same, but the plate aims to provide a simpler visual cue for healthy eating. It's like a pie chart for your meals. Visit ChooseMyPlate.Gov to learn more about MyPlate.

Sources: *The American Dietetic Associations Complete Food and Nutrition Guide; American Dietetic Association; Nutrition Action Healthletter*



Brown bag lunch delights

Sending your children to school with wholesome brown bag lunches can help them maintain a healthy weight and provide them with the nutrition they need to be energized and ready to learn. It may save you money, too!

Here are five packable meals that your children will be sure to love. Just add milk money!

- **SORT OF SUSHI.** Spread ½ cup cooked brown rice on a whole-wheat flour tortilla. Arrange ½ cup cooked chicken breast strips and a couple of thin cooked broccoli spears on one end. Sprinkle lightly with reduced-sodium soy sauce. Tightly roll up and slice into 2-inch pieces. Wrap in plastic wrap. Add orange segments.
- **SEASHELL SALAD.** Combine ½ cup cooked whole-wheat shell pasta, 3 ounces canned tuna, ¼ cup shredded carrots, and enough low-fat salad



dressing to moisten. Pack in a container. Add a sliced apple.

- **SNACKER'S SPECIAL.** Combine ½ cup whole-grain toasted oat cereal, ¼ cup roasted soy nuts or peanuts, 1 cup air-popped popcorn, and ¼ cup diced dried apples in a plastic bag. Add ½ teaspoon cinnamon and shake well. Add a bag of grape tomatoes and a stick of string cheese.
- **PITA WITH PB AND B.** Slice open two mini whole-wheat pita breads. Spread 1 tablespoon peanut butter on each. Top with thin banana slices and close. Add a small peeled cucumber (cut into spears) and a container of reduced-fat ranch dressing.
- **BACON CRUNCHERS.** Lightly spread honey mustard on four whole-wheat bagel chips. Cut two cooked Canadian bacon slices to fit, then place them on top of the bagel chips. Cover with baby spinach and close with bagel chips. Add a bag of strawberries.

Sources: ChooseMyPlate.gov; Tanner-Blasiar, Marilyn K., MHS, RD, LD, American Dietetic Association spokesperson

The benefits of family time at dinnertime

Family meals can help ease the stresses of daily living, evidence suggests. They also may help enhance well-being and communication among family members. They can even affect your youngster's health. Research shows that kids who have frequent family meals:

- Eat more fruits and veggies
- Are less likely to be overweight
- Have fewer eating disorders
- Get higher grades
- Are less depressed

One study published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* found that family meals might protect against risky behaviors. Researchers say eating meals together fosters a sense of family connectedness, which seems to keep kids away from high-risk behaviors.

Want to cook up some family fun? Try these ideas:

- Look at your family's schedule and try to set up at least four family meals each week. Plan ahead and cook meals that can be frozen and reheated, such as soups and casseroles.
- Keep a set mealtime whenever possible.
- Allow kids to plan at least one weekly family meal. If they can help prepare it, that's even better.
- Try to avoid fast food during mealtime. Look at family meals as an opportunity to introduce your kids to new, healthy foods.
- Don't worry about being a "top chef." Keep meals simple — just keep it together as a family. No time to do dishes one evening? Then have a "picnic," indoors or out, with paper plates and plastic utensils.

Sources: International Food Information Council Foundation; Center for Science in the Public Interest; Meals Matter



“Brush up” on toothbrush care

You brush at least twice a day, floss daily and have the pearly whites to prove it. But has your toothbrush been lost in the mix?

Caring for your toothbrush

Follow these simple steps to make sure your toothbrush is the proper tool for your teeth!

- 1 Replace your toothbrush every 3 to 4 months (or sooner if the bristles start to bend or fray).
- 2 Rinse your toothbrush with tap water after brushing and allow it to air dry. Air drying will help get rid of bacteria that die when exposed to air.
- 3 Store your toothbrush upright so it can drain and air dry faster. If kept in a cup with other toothbrushes, don't allow it to touch the others to avoid spreading germs.
- 4 Don't share toothbrushes.
- 5 Avoid placing your toothbrush in a small container for long periods of time. Moisture can easily build up, creating an environment for bacteria to grow. For trips or vacations, allow your toothbrush to air dry completely before storing it.

Toothbrush care myths

There currently is not any evidence showing that soaking your toothbrush in a mouth rinse or other sanitizer will be effective. And, washing your toothbrush in a dishwasher can damage its functionality.

There is also little support showing that bacteria on your toothbrush can cause health problems. The body is used to fighting germs and infections, not to mention the mouth is already full of natural bacteria.

Following these simple tasks will keep your toothbrush — and your teeth — in tip-top shape!

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention





How to spot eye trouble in your child

Children's eyes are their windows to the world. But eye problems can distort this view. They can make images look blurry and unclear. Left untreated, they may affect a child's learning ability and confidence.

Early detection of eye problems can protect your child's sight. Regular vision tests can help uncover many eye conditions. But it's also important to tell your child's doctor about any signs of trouble. These could include:

- Crooked or crossed eyes
- Drooping eyelids
- Squinting or eye rubbing
- Holding objects close to her eyes
- Complaints of headaches, dizziness, or nausea after doing something up close, such as reading.

DID YOU KNOW?

Remember: An annual routine eye exam is a benefit under your child's CHIP coverage. To locate a participating provider near you, contact Davis Vision at **1-888-393-2583**.

Clear causes

If a problem is suspected, your child's doctor will probably use an eye test to determine the cause. Many times, refractive errors are to blame. These can make a child's vision blurry. The following are examples of two common refractive errors:

- **Nearsightedness:** difficulty making out far away objects
- **Farsightedness:** problems seeing items close up

Untreated, refractive errors may lead to a serious eye condition called amblyopia, or lazy eye. Amblyopia can result in blindness.

Eyewear makes a difference

Many common vision problems can be corrected with prescription glasses or contacts. Contacts require extra care and handling. They may be better suited for older children. Glasses, however, can be worn at any age.

Unfortunately, some children don't want to wear glasses. Parents can help encourage the habit with these tips:

- Let your child help choose her frames. The best-looking frames,

experts say, are the opposite shape of the face. For example, round frames flatter a more square face.

- Regularly tell your child that her glasses look good.
- Talk to her siblings beforehand to minimize teasing.

Sources: National Eye Institute, National Institutes of Health; British Medical Journal; American Academy of Pediatrics; American Family Physician; American Academy of Ophthalmology; Journal of School Health; Pediatrics; Archives of Ophthalmology; American Academy of Family Physicians

Keep your kids on schedule

Experts advise that children get their eyes checked at the first sign of any problem. Also, children should have eye exams at the following ages:

- Newborn
- 6 months to 1 year
- 2½ to 3½ years
- 5 years

If your child already has a vision problem, her eyes may need more frequent screenings. Talk to her doctor about what schedule is best for her.



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**Do it
today!**

CHIP: Remember to renew!

The Caring Foundation verifies children's eligibility for CHIP once each year. Your child's renewal form will be mailed to your home every year, 90 days before the anniversary of enrollment. To avoid your child's coverage being cancelled, it is extremely important that you complete the renewal form and return it to the Caring Foundation as soon as possible.

There are three ways to renew:

- Go to www.compass.state.pa.us and submit your child's renewal information online.
- Call **1-800-986-5437** and renew by phone.
- Complete the form you receive in the mail and return it to the Caring Foundation.

In all cases, you must sign the signature page and mail it back, along with copies of your current income documentation.

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Help kids get their game on

Is your child spending too much time in front of a screen? Take advantage of sports programs to get youngsters excited about exercise.

Parents who take an active role can help kids get off the couch and onto the field, says one study. Kids are more likely to participate in sports when their parents think it's important.

Playing sports in childhood can lead to a healthier adulthood. Regular exercise and sports participation:

- Boost physical fitness
- Control weight
- Build self-esteem
- Teach cooperation, self-discipline, and perseverance

Get involved

Motivating kids to move takes more than talking. Children are more physically active if their parents are active and provide occasions for exercise.

Start by helping your youngster find a sport that's fun and interesting. Let

children try many physical activities to find out what they like and are good at.

Find sports programs through schools, parks and recreation departments, and religious or civic organizations. Your child will also need proper equipment, transportation to practices and games, and your emotional support for learning a new skill.

Play it safe

Talk with your doctor before your child begins a new physical activity routine or sport. A pre-sports checkup should include a complete physical exam. Don't rule out sports if your child has had a chronic health problem. Check with your doctor about what activities are appropriate.

Sources: President's Council on Physical Fitness; Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise; National Institutes of Health; American Heart Association; American Journal of Preventive Medicine; BMC Public Health; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Health Psychology; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office on Women's Health; American College of Sports Medicine ACSM Fit Society Page