

WELL CHILD CARE Four year check-up

Eating:

Offer your child food from all the food groups every day. Good food habits start now and will last a lifetime. Be aware of what he has for snacks. Limit sweets, soda pop and other drinks/foods he takes that have a lot of sugar.

Teeth:

Your child should have seen a dentist by now. He needs routine check-ups and cleanings. He needs to brush and floss his teething daily.

Talking:

If you counted all the words your preschooler knows, it would be over 1,500. He can name one or more colors, and count correctly to about 10. Preschoolers love to tell stories. Listen closely and you can tell that some part of the story is made up. This is normal and helps him practice his talking and thinking skills. He should be able to say his name, parents' name, phone number, address and age.

Thinking:

Your preschooler has a better understanding of time, even though he still can't read a clock. He may be able to tell you the numbers on a digital clock. He can look at an object from only one dimension. For example, he will say that the glass that is taller is the bigger one, when the shorter one may be able to hold more liquid.

Moving:

Your preschooler is much more coordinated now. He can throw and catch a ball. Watch him skip and hop on one foot. Some preschoolers can even do a somersault now. See if he can walk on just his heels.

Quiet time activities are more productive now. He can use safety scissors to cut out pictures. He can copy a square and draw a man with three parts. His hands can handle cards for easy games like "Old Maid," "Go Fish," or "War." Your child will like some easy board games to play with other children and yourself. Check the box to see if 4 year olds can play the game.

Playing:

Have you noticed how little you need to do for your preschooler these days? He is pretty much independent now. He takes pride in what he can do. Be sure to tell him how well he does things. Have you heard about his invisible friend yet? If not, I'm sure he's coming to play soon. This is normal for all preschoolers to invent a "friend" who does everything that your child wants him to do. It is a way of practicing for the real world.

Preschoolers are the best actors. They love to entertain by singing, dancing, or just acting. This is one of the few ages where they will perform for your friends.

Preparing for School:

Is your preschooler ready for school? Ask yourself these questions:

1. Can he obey rules?
2. Can he get along with others?
3. Can he not be disruptive when two people are talking?
4. Does he know his name and address?
5. Can he get dressed by himself?
6. Can he leave you for a short time?

Preschoolers rebel if we ask too much of them. They may try to run away or act out by yelling or crying. Listen to what your preschooler is saying to you. This shows that you respect him and his ideas. If something is frustrating him, help him out or put it away for a while and try again later.

Your preschooler still likes to help out and doesn't want to do anything wrong. He obeys your rules because you say so. He doesn't understand why the rules are made. It can be very hard for a preschooler if the adults have different rules. Stay consistent with your rules and discipline. Time out in a quiet place for 4 or 5 minutes works well. You can also take away privileges, such as watching TV or putting a toy that is causing problems away for a day.

Safety

When he turns 4 years old and weighs 40 to 80 pounds, he should use a booster seat when riding in a car. Remember the rule-the car doesn't move unless everyone is buckled in. Keep children safely in the back seat. Your child should always wear a helmet when riding a scooter or a bike.

Guard against drowning. Knowing how to 'swim' does not, in anyway, make a child water safe. You should never leave a bucket or doggy bowl with water where the child can reach. If you have pool, you should have a four-sided fence with a self-latching gate. Nothing can replace constant adult supervision.

REMEMBER: Teach your preschooler to be aware of strangers.

Now that your child is away from you more often, he needs to be made aware of strangers.

- Teach him to only talk to and go with adults that you know.
- Talk with him about what he could do if he was approached by an adult he didn't know.
- Decide on a code word for your family to use if a special situation arose where he would need to go home with a different family member or friend.