

Your 3- to 4-Year-Old Child

Diet

- Offer a variety of healthy foods, and try to eat together as a family. It is your child's job to decide how much to eat and whether to eat at all.
- Growth in preschoolers is sporadic, and their appetites are as well. Expect appetite slumps and food fads. Do not force or cajole; your child knows how hungry he/she is. Stick to your family's schedule, with time between meals for your child to become hungry.
- Limit sweets, salty and fatty foods, and juice. Avoid sticky fruit snacks — they are difficult to remove from teeth.
- Your child should drink around 16–20 ounces of low-fat milk each day. Too much milk can result in picky eating and anemia. If your child is not a milk drinker, encourage other foods which contain calcium (yogurt, cheese, soy or almond milk, tofu, kale, broccoli).
- Multivitamins may be recommended if your child's diet seems inadequate.
- Continue to be cautious of choking hazards. Have your child sit when eating.

Elimination

- Most children are potty trained by 3–4 years of age, although accidents are common. Nighttime dryness may not be achieved for years, especially for children who are sound sleepers.
- If becoming diaper-free has not been a priority for your child, don't despair. Continue to provide positive feedback and encouragement for even small steps in the right direction, such as reporting the need for a diaper change.
- If your child has infrequent, hard stools, or "stool holding," this may interfere with toilet training. We can suggest dietary measures and/or a stool softener. It's best to delay toilet training until this problem has resolved.

Sleep

- Preschoolers thrive with predictable routines, especially at bedtime. Most 3-year-olds sleep through the night and take a nap. By age 4, many children give up naps; they may benefit from "quiet time" in the afternoon.
- Nighttime fears and nightmares are common problems. Reassurance and maintaining a consistent schedule, can be helpful.

Development

- Most 3-year-olds can jump, walk up and down stairs, pedal a tricycle, kick a ball, copy a circle, put on some clothing, use 3–4 word sentences, recognize some numbers, colors and shapes, and play pretend games.
- Most 4-year-olds can hop and balance on one foot, draw a square, use full sentences, play games and take turns, dress without help, zip and button. The 4-year-old is a delightful conversationalist; he is able to tell an involved story and relate a new experience. Imaginative play holds great fascination for the 4-year-old.
- Books are wonderful learning tools at this age. Let your child tell part of the story by looking at the pictures

Behavior/Discipline

- Be consistent. Praise good behavior. A 4-year-old will respond well to praise and clearly-stated, consistent rules; a 3-year-old is still learning.
- Handle anger constructively in your family by settling disputes with respectful discussion and time alone to cool down.
- Do not allow hitting or biting. Stop it immediately and explain how it makes other people feel. Help your child apologize. Praise him when he demonstrates sensitivity to the feelings of others.
- Try time-outs for unacceptable behavior. A minute per year of age is a good guideline.
- If your child is not already involved, now is the time to consider a preschool or play group to develop social skills.
- Limit your child's exposure to television or electronics, and make sure to monitor content. Try to set a good example.
- Spend quality time with your child every day — read books, do crafts, pretend play. Foster the habit of exercise: walk, hike, bike, play tag.
- Curiosity about body parts is normal. Answer questions in a matter of fact way, using correct terms.

Safety

- Children under 8 years of age must be secured in a car seat or booster, in the back seat. Always read the manufacturer's instructions, note the weight limits and use an appropriate size. A five point harness is always safest.
- With new found speed and agility come new safety concerns for your child. Falls are common. Install second floor window gates. Make sure blind cords are out of reach.
- If you own a gun, store it unloaded and locked in a separate location from ammunition (which should also be locked).
- Teach children to be careful around pets, especially when a pet is eating.
- Use sunscreen, SPF 30 or greater, and a hat and sunglasses.
- This is a good age to begin organized swimming lessons. Knowing how to swim does not ensure safety; constant supervision is required.
- Use a bicycle helmet whenever your child is on wheels (trike, bike, or scooter).
- Start discussing stranger safety and privacy, and teach your child his full name, address and phone number.

Fever/Illness

- Fever is a common symptom in children, usually caused by the immune system's response to an infection. Any temperature over 100.4° F is considered a fever. Once you've identified a fever, you can treat it with acetaminophen or ibuprofen to make your child more comfortable. Depending on other symptoms, it may be necessary to come to the office, although most fevers are caused by viruses, and can be managed at home.
- More important than the number on the thermometer is how your child looks and acts. If your child is interactive after receiving fever medicine, that is a good sign.
- Please call our office to report fever that lasts more than 72 hours, or is accompanied by other concerning symptoms (decreased drinking, decreased urine output, labored breathing, or looking very ill).
- Being prepared can help you cope with fever. Keep your thermometer handy, have acetaminophen or ibuprofen (and dosing information) available, and take these with you when travelling.

Prevention

- Schedule dental visits every six months, and brush your child's teeth twice a day. Use a soft toothbrush and a dab of toothpaste. By age 3, most children have all 20 primary teeth.
- This is a good age to have your child's vision tested, even if it seems fine (a problem in one eye can be compensated for by the other eye). Hearing can be checked if you have concerns.
- A good resource for information about vaccines is vaccine.chop.edu/parents.
- A useful website for reliable information about a wide variety of pediatric health topics is healthychildren.org.

Today, and at the next check-up

- Your child will have a physical examination and your questions and concerns will be answered.
- At 3 years of age, usually no vaccines are needed.
- Vaccines for kindergarten entry are given at the 4- and 5-year checkups. This includes MMRV, polio and DPaT boosters; they may be divided between the two checkups.
- You will be given a developmental questionnaire to complete at home and mail back to our office.

Acetaminophen Dosing Instructions

Every 4–6 hours and no more than 4 doses/day

Weight	Dose	Children's Suspension
24–35 lbs	160 mg	1 tsp or 5 mL
36–47 lbs	240 mg	1½ tsp or 7.5 mL

Ibuprofen Dosing Instructions

Every 6–8 hours

Weight	Dose	Children's Suspension
24–35 lbs	100 mg	1 tsp or 5 mL
36–47 lbs	150 mg	1½ tsp. or 7.5 mL