

# Your School Aged Child



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## **NEXT WELL VISIT: In one year**

### **DENTAL CARE:**

- Brush teeth with a grain of rice sized amount of fluoride toothpaste twice a day.
- Take your child to the dentist twice a year

### **NUTRITION AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLES:**

Eating well and exercising regularly helps maintain a healthy weight. Children who are obese at age 6 have a 25 percent chance of being obese as adults, while children who are obese at age 12 have a 75 percent chance of remaining obese. Obesity can lead to serious health problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, joint problems and liver disease.

Unfortunately, all of these problems can begin in childhood.

### **Here are simple ideas that everyone should follow to lead a healthier life:**

- Eat regular meals and if your child snacks, limit them to healthy foods such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grain crackers.
- Continue to avoid juices, sodas, and sports drinks, as they have lots of sugar and calories.
- Avoid processed foods by preparing meals with fresh ingredients.
- Eat together as a family and not in front of the TV or other screens.
- Drink non-or low-fat milk and lots of water.
- Limit how often you eat at restaurants.
- Restaurant portions tend to be much larger than needed. Share a meal or save half for a future meal. Eliminate fast foods.
- Limit second helpings.
- Limit special treats and desserts to one or two per week.
- Limit screen time to no more than two hours per day.
- Exercise at least three to five times a week for 40 to 60 minutes each time.

Calcium is needed to build strong, healthy bones. Weight-bearing exercise also helps to build strong bones. Children from ages 5-8 need 800 mg/day. Children ages 9 and up need 1,300 mg/day, continue to supplement with vitamin D.

### **SAFETY**

- Car safety: Booster seats are required until 8 years of age or until your child reaches 4 feet 9 inches tall. Weight is irrelevant. Children should always ride in the back seat of the car until age 12.
- Bicycle and skating safety: Wear a helmet and other protective gear if indicated.
- Water safety: Follow safety guidelines when your child is around water. Teach your child to swim.
- Make sure your child knows what to do in case of a fire or other emergency and can recite his or her name, address and phone number. Put emergency numbers by your phone.
- Apply sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher when he or she is outdoors. Have your child wear a hat.
- If you have guns in your home, keep them unloaded, locked and stored away from ammunition.
- If you are worried about violence in your home, speak with your doctor or contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or ndvh.org.

### **MIDDLE SCHOOL TRANSITION**

- Expectations from school often increase during this time. Your child will be expected to take on more responsibility for school work and may have larger amounts of homework each night. Encourage your child to read every day and provide guidance and assistance as needed. Remember to make sure your expectations are appropriate for your child's age.

- Sometimes children face challenges such as school refusal, difficulty making friends, bullying, or peer pressure. Some children may show signs of problems with attention or hyperactivity. If you are concerned about the school environment or your child's behavior and performance at school, schedule a meeting with his or her teacher, and discuss your concerns with your child's health care provider. Talking openly with them, at this age, about topics such as these encourages children to feel more comfortable talking to his or her parents when difficulties arise.

### **BODY CHANGES**

As your child grows, you will begin to see the first signs of puberty. For girls, this is usually developing breasts. For boys, this is usually testicular enlargement. Puberty generally takes two to five years to complete. Children generally grow about 2 inches per year until puberty and then about 4-5 inches per year during puberty. If you see signs of puberty before age 8 in girls or before age 9 in boys, it is a good idea to talk to your health care provider. Your child may begin to ask questions about puberty. Try to talk openly and honestly to them.

- The Care and Keeping of You: The Body Book for American Girls - American Girl Library Series
- The Boy's Body Book: Everything You Need to Know for Growing Up
- YOU by Kell Dunham OR The Body Book for Boys by Jonathan Mar

### **MENTAL HEALTH**

- Friends begin to take on a bigger role in your child's life. Ask your child about who his or her friends are and what they talk about. Make time to get to know other parents. Encourage play dates at home so you can observe how your child interacts with his or her peers.
- Your child may experience depression and/or anxiety during these years triggered by sad or stressful events or other problems with no obvious precursor. If your child is consistently sad, lacks energy, no longer enjoys activities that used to be pleasurable, starts to withdraw from family and friends, is more irritable, angry or anxious, has sleep or appetite disturbances, bring these concerns to your child's doctor.
- The average age children begin experimenting with alcohol is 11 years old, so this is an appropriate time to start discussing drugs, alcohol and smoking with your kids.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- Family Media Plan <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/default.aspx>
- American Academy of Pediatrics, Healthy Children website  
<https://www.healthychildren.org/english/ages-stages/baby/Pages/default.aspx>