



PATIENT EDUCATION

# *Caring for Your Seven- to Ten-Year-Old*

MAYO CLINIC CHILDREN'S CENTER



BARBARA WOODWARD LIPS  
PATIENT EDUCATION CENTER

## Mayo Clinic Children's Center

*For more than 100 years, teams of physicians have cared for children at Mayo Clinic*

T. DENNY SANFORD PEDIATRIC CENTER

MAYO EUGENIO LITTA CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

*Pediatric Sub-Specialties in the following areas:*

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Allergy & Immunology	General Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine	Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
Anesthesiology	Genetics (Medical)	Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
Cardiology	Gynecology, Adolescent	Psychiatry and Psychology
Cardiovascular Surgery	Hematology and Oncology	Pulmonology
Child and Family Advocacy Program	Infectious Diseases	Radiation Oncology
Community Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine	Maxillofacial surgery	Radiology
Critical Care	Neonatal Medicine	Regional (Health System) Pediatrics
Dermatology	Nephrology	Research
Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics	Neurology	Rheumatology
Emergency Medicine	Neurosurgery	Sleep Medicine Center
Endocrinology and Metabolism	Ophthalmology	Speech Pathology
Gastroenterology and Hepatology	Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery	Surgery
	Orthopedic Surgery	Urology
	Otorhinolaryngology	

*Pediatric Specialty Clinics:*

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Adrenoleukodystrophy clinic	Dana Child Developmental and Learning Disorders Program	Metabolic Bone Clinic
Aerodigestive Clinic	Dermatology Genetics Clinic	Mood Disorders Clinic
Anxiety Disorders Clinic and Intensive Therapy Program	Diabetes Clinic	Neurodevelopmental Follow-up Clinic
Arrhythmia and Device Placement Clinic	Eating Disorders Clinic	Neuromuscular Clinic
Asthma Center	Eosinophilic Esophagitis Clinic	Pain Clinic
Attention Deficient Hyperactivity Disorders (ADHD) Clinic	Epilepsy Clinic	Pain Rehabilitation Center
Bariatric Surgery Clinic	Erythromelalgia Clinic	Pediatric Diagnostic Referral Clinic
Brain Injury Program	Facial Paralysis and Reanimation Clinic	Pediatric Level 1 Trauma Center
Brain Tumor Clinic	Feeding Program	Plagiocephaly Program
Cerebral Palsy Clinic	Fertility Preservation	Pulmonary Hypertension Program
Chemotherapy/Radiation Long Term Effects Clinic	Fetal Surgery Program	Renal Stone Clinic
Child and Adolescent Intensive Mood Program (CAIMP)	Friedreich's Ataxia Clinic	Spina Bifida Clinic
Childhood Sarcoma Clinic	Functional Movement Disorder Program	Spinal Deformities Clinic
ComPASS (Palliative Care and Integrative Medicine)	Heart Failure Clinic	Sports Medicine Center
Congenital Heart Clinic	Hemophilia/Coagulopathy Clinic	Thyroid Nodule/Cancer Clinic
Constraint Induced Movement Therapy Program	Hyperlipidemia Program	Transgender Clinic
Craniofacial Clinic	Immunodeficiency Disorders Clinic	Transitions Program
Cystic Fibrosis Center	Inflammatory Bowel Disease Clinic	Transplant Center
	Learning Disorders Assessment Clinic	Travel Clinic
	Long QT Syndrome Clinic	Vascular Malformations
	Marfan Syndrome clinic	Velo-Pharyngeal Insufficiency Clinic
		Voiding Clinic
		Weight Management Clinic

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# These Are Fun Years

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Children during middle childhood (the years between seven and ten) are fun to be around. Even though they may want independence, this is an important time to help them develop the skills and confidence they'll need as they move toward the pre-teen years.

Children go through many changes during this time. One big change you may see is a growing sense of independence from parents and family. Children spend more time in school and take part in activities outside the home. Friendships become more and more important.

Children in this age group often spend more time each day with teachers, care providers, coaches, and friends than they do with family members. But the time you spend with your child during middle childhood is just as important to their development as it was during those younger years. Children now begin to develop a more complex sense of who they are and what their abilities are. They begin to develop a sense of their place in the world. They start to learn how to cope with the ups and down of life.

This is an important time to

- Help your child develop a sense of responsibility, empathy for others, and confidence.
- Engage with your child's school to keep up with your child's progress and to address any issues that may arise. Peer pressure and bullying are more likely to occur starting in elementary school. Talk to your child about challenges that may come up.
- Help your child develop a sense of right and wrong.

Continue to set boundaries and guidelines. Set them for mealtime, bedtime, and daily household chores. Set them for screen time, family time, and anything else you feel strongly about.

Be a good example for your child. Your child watches what you do. Model the behaviors and beliefs you hope to see in your child. This helps your child understand what you value. And don't forget to enjoy your child along the way!

# Developmental Milestones

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Developmental milestones are specific skills or tasks that most children are able to do once they reach a certain age. However, each child is different. Each develops at different rates. The time a child actually reaches each milestone can vary by quite a bit. Talk about any concerns you may have regarding your child's development with your health care provider. Getting your questions answered can help you feel more confident about your role as a parent.

Some of the most important milestones in the life of a seven- to ten-year-old center around mental, emotional, and social development. These milestones include, but are not limited to, the following.

## **Mental development**

Children usually begin to read and write early in middle childhood. They continue to develop these skills as they approach the pre-teen years.

Language development continues at a steady pace. Most children in this age group can speak in a manner that is easily understood. Children learn to take turns in conversation, give details to support what they are saying, and they stay on topic during conversations.

Math skills continue to grow during this time.

This is a time when learning problems may appear. Watch for difficulties with tasks like

- basic spelling, grammar, and math skills,
- organizing information, materials, and concepts,
- remembering simple facts.

This is also a time where some children show signs of behavior that can disrupt learning. Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) often is diagnosed in middle childhood.

If you have any concerns about your child's progress in school or with mastering basic skills, talk to your child's teacher or your health care provider. Both are partners who can help you help your child.

## Learning disorders

Learning disorders aren't the same as mental or physical disabilities, and they don't reflect a child's intelligence. Instead, learning disorders affect a child's ability to complete a task or use certain skills, particularly in school.

Learning disorders can make it hard for a child to read, write, or do simple math.

Many children who have learning disorders, also known as learning disabilities, struggle for a long time before they get help. This can affect a child's self-esteem and motivation.

There are many resources for children with learning disorders. Early diagnosis can help your child in the long run.

Talk to your child's teacher and your health care provider if you have concerns.



## **Moral and ethical development**

It is hard to identify specific milestones of moral and ethical development in middle childhood. But it is the time children begin to think deeply about right and wrong. They begin to see the gray areas that often go along with making tough decisions.

Children in this age range also begin to think about the consequences of behaviors and actions. They start to develop a sense of responsibility. And they begin to show a sense of understanding and compassion toward others. They explore values such as honesty and courage.

It's natural for children of this age to test a range of behaviors. Some are more likely to challenge authority and push moral and ethical boundaries than others. Talk with your child about what you value. Model caring and ethical behavior.

To teach your child to be a responsible and caring individual:

- Act in a caring way to your child and to others.
- Provide meaningful ways for your child to contribute to the family. Assign chores that fit the age of your child. Consider giving an allowance as a way to help your child understand the importance of money in our society. Talk about how much to save, spend, and perhaps donate to a cause that is important to your child.
- Talk to your child in a way that encourages discussion of complex issues. Do not shy away from difficult conversations.
- Value the uniqueness and diversity among people.
- Volunteer in your community.
- Seek out ways to engage your child in the community.

## **Social and emotional development**

Each child is unique. A wide range for social and emotional development is normal. If you have any concerns about your child's development, please talk to your health care provider.

Social and emotional milestones in middle childhood include an increasing sense of independence and self-consciousness. The following sections touch on social and emotional issues involving friends, school, peer pressure, bullying, behavior and discipline, and readiness to stay home alone.

### **Sibling rivalry**

Sibling rivalry is a normal, healthy part of childhood. Typically, children who are close in age show the most rivalry.

The following strategies may help to prevent or reduce sibling rivalry between children:

- Treat each child as an individual. Recognize what's special about each child. Do not compare one child to another.
- Praise good behavior.
- Teach alternatives to fighting. Encourage talking about problems.
- Ask your children to resolve their own conflicts. Allow them to work out situations on their own.
- Do not overreact to sibling disputes or take sides.
- If you have to step in, use verbal reasoning or take away privileges to stop sibling rivalry.

When children learn how to handle rivalry, they learn how to cooperate, problem solve, and negotiate. These are important skills as they mature and grow.

### **School and friends**

School takes on a greater role in your child's life during middle childhood. Your child likely not only spends full days in school but also may participate in after-school activities. These can range from sports to after-school childcare to other organized group activities.

Children in this age range tend to care deeply about how they are seen by their peers. For many children, making friends becomes very important. Friendships are more often made with children of the same gender. Spending time with small groups of friends just talking and hanging out becomes more common.

As the importance of friendships increases, so do the ups and downs of making friends. As with adult friendships, children can get a lot of emotional support and positive feedback from their circle of friends. But they can also experience sadness, anger, and jealousy. They can feel hurt if they think they are being left out.

"Best friends" often change rapidly. Children can experience complicated feelings of betrayal and guilt as their circle of friends changes. Friends can also be mean, and even good-natured teasing can be painful for this age group.

Talk to your child about the ups and downs of friendships. Talk about what to do if they have problems with friends or peers. Get to know your child's friends if you can.

**Tips to help your child develop a strong sense of self-esteem**

- Spend time with your child. Talk about friends, accomplishments, and challenges.
- Be involved with your child's school. Go to school events. Meet your child's teachers.
- Meet the families of your child's friends.
- Encourage your child to join school and community groups.
- Help your child develop a sense of right and wrong. Talk about the pressure friends might bring to do risky things. There may be pressure to do dangerous physical dares or act in a way that would hurt someone's feelings.
- Talk with your child about respecting others. Encourage your child to help those in need.
- Be affectionate and honest with your child.
- Do things together as a family.

**Peer pressure**

Peer pressure can become an issue during middle childhood. It is important to talk to your child about what to do if they are pressured to do something they don't want to do or know is wrong. For this age group, the desire to fit in can lead a child to do surprising and unexpected things. This even can include self-destructive things.

You can help your child cope with peer pressure. Talk with your child regularly about friendships and other peer relationships. When you love, encourage, and help your child face challenges, you help to develop a strong sense of self-esteem. Self-esteem can help your child stand up to peer pressure.

## Bullying

Bullying is a serious problem that has been linked to:

- **Mental health problems.** Children who are bullied are at increased risk of depression, anxiety, sleep problems, low self-esteem, and thoughts of self-harm and suicide.
- **Lower academic performance.** Children who are bullied can be afraid to go to school and are more likely to get poor grades.
- **Violence.** Children who are bullied can be more likely to act out. A small number of children who are bullied may react with violent measures.

To help your child handle bullying, learn to recognize it. And understand how to respond to it.

### *Types of bullying*

Bullying is a form of aggression. It happens when one or more children repeatedly and intentionally intimidate, harass, or harm another child.

Bullying can take many forms:

- **Physical.** Includes hitting, tripping, and kicking, as well as destruction of a child's property.
- **Verbal.** Includes teasing, name-calling, taunting, and making inappropriate sexual comments.
- **Psychological or social.** Includes spreading rumors about a child, embarrassing a child in public, or excluding a child from a group.
- **Electronic.** Cyber-bullying uses an electronic medium to threaten or harm others. This includes email, websites, social media platforms, text messages, or videos posted on websites or sent through phones.



### **Warning signs of bullying**

Your child may remain quiet about being bullied out of fear, shame, or embarrassment.

Be on the lookout for these warning signs:

- Lost or destroyed clothing, electronics, or other items
- Sudden loss of friends
- Poor school performance
- Doesn't want to go to school
- Headaches, stomachaches, or other physical complaints
- Trouble sleeping
- Changes in eating habits
- Feelings of helplessness or low self-esteem

### ***If your child is being bullied***

If you suspect that your child is being bullied, take the situation seriously.

- **Encourage your child to share their concerns.** Remain calm. Listen in a loving manner. Support your child's feelings. Express understanding and concern. Remind your child that being bullied is not their fault.
- **Learn about the situation.** Ask your child about how and when the bullying occurs and who is involved. Find out what your child has done to try to stop the bullying. Ask about what has or hasn't worked. Ask what you can do to help your child feel safe.
- **Teach your child how to respond.** Don't promote retaliation or fighting back against a bully. Instead, your child might tell the bully to leave them alone, walk away from the bully, or ignore the bully. Your child can ask a teacher, coach, or other adult for help. Tell your child not to respond to cyber-bullying.
- **Boost your child's self-confidence.** Encourage your child to build friendships and get involved in activities that match your child's strengths and talents.

### *Responding to bullying*

If your child tells you about being bullied, take action. For example:

- **Record the details.** Write down the date, who was involved, and what happened. Save screenshots, emails, and texts.
- **Contact authorities.** Seek help from your child’s principal, teacher, or the school guidance counselor. If your child has been physically attacked or otherwise threatened with harm, talk to school officials and call the police.
- **Calmly explain your concerns.** Ask for help to solve the bullying problem. Keep notes on these meetings. Keep in contact with school officials. If the bullying continues, keep making contact.
- **Ask for a copy of the school’s policy on bullying.** Find out how bullying is addressed in your child’s school. Find out how teachers and staff members are required to respond to bullying.

### **Behavior and discipline**

The American Academy of Pediatrics advises that spanking a child is not an effective method of discipline. It may relieve your frustration for the moment. It may stop the unwanted behavior for a brief time. But spanking may have other negative consequences.

Children between the ages of seven and ten usually respond well to the following forms of discipline and positive reinforcement.

- **Logical consequences** — Consequences that come about as a result of a child’s behavior. For example, if a child is unkind to a playmate or sibling, the child cannot play with the playmate or sibling for a period of time and will need to play alone.
- **Loss of privileges** — Taking away toys, limiting time spent with friends, and turning off the TV or computer for a specified amount of time.
- **Rewards** — Children in this age range often respond well to positive reinforcement. Rewards will depend on your child, but they may include special time spent with you or with friends, additional computer time, a desired item such as a toy or a book, or perhaps a bike ride or trip to the skate park.
- **Encouragement** — Use encouraging words when you speak with your child. Let your child know that you value good choices and positive actions.

If your child has behavior issues that cause problems in school or with friends and family, talk to your health care provider. Together you and your health care provider can talk about ways to help your child.

## Staying home alone

Deciding when your child is old enough to stay home alone depends on a number of things.

Each child is different, so it's important to consider your child's

- Age and maturity.
- Comfort level with being left alone.
- Health.
- Understanding of what to do in an emergency.

In general, seven-year-olds should not be left alone. Eight- to ten-year-olds should not be left alone for more than three hours.

Before you leave your child home alone, be sure your child is comfortable with it and knows how to reach you. Go over what to do in an emergency. Check in by phone if you can.



## **Fostering resiliency**

Remember when your child was just learning to walk? They would pull themselves up to a standing position and try to take that first step. You stopped yourself from helping. You let your child find the right footing, catch the right balance, and stand alone.

There were a few falls, but all was okay. And in time your child got a little stronger, a little more independent, and a little more confident. That strength, independence, and confidence are all part of a skill that is valuable throughout life.

That skill is called resilience.

Some things you can do to help your child develop resilience:

- Express your love often. Focus on caring and support. However, don't try to do everything for your child. And don't try to fix everything.
- Set consistent expectations for behavior. Follow up with logical consequences.
- Praise your child's efforts and initiative. Don't always focus on the outcome.
- Give your child opportunities to try new things and learn new skills.
- Encourage your child to solve problems alone, without your help. When your child struggles with something, ask what is wrong. Listen and talk about it, but try not to take over and "save the day."

## **Finding balance**

It's important to help your child find a balance in their scheduled activities and their playtime.

Take a close look at your child's schedule. Make sure the things they are doing are enjoyable. Do they offer enriching experiences? It is important to let your child enjoy free time.

Children in middle childhood are developing a sense of who they are and what their abilities and interests are. It can be stressful for children to be overscheduled. It limits chances for them to develop their creativity and interact freely with other children.

# Physical Development

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Your child's health care provider will continue to monitor your child's growth and physical development.

Children generally grow at a slow and steady rate during this time, but some children have rapid growth spurts in the later stages of middle childhood.

Your child may be worried about height and weight and may show an increased interest in clothing and appearance. This happens especially in the later years of middle childhood. The section below titled "Nutrition, Fitness, and Health" addresses these issues.

Talk to your child's health care provider if you or your child is concerned about weight gain or growth or if your child experiences a rapid weight gain or loss.

Around this time, some children will have bodily changes related to puberty. Girls develop pubic or body hair, and hips and breasts grow. Boys have penis and testes development and may develop pubic or body hair.

Girls tend to experience changes related to puberty a little earlier than boys. As your child experiences these changes, they may feel self-conscious or embarrassed.

Talk openly with your child about these changes. Answer any questions your child asks.

## **Talking about sex**

Talking to your child about sex should be an ongoing conversation, not a one-time event.

- Ask your child if they have any questions about sex.
- Let your child set the pace with questions.
- Provide the information your child asks for in a way that can be easily understood.
- Use correct terms for body parts and sexual activity whenever possible. Teach your child the names of body parts. This gives your child the language to ask questions and express concerns.
- As your child matures and asks more detailed questions, provide more detailed answers.

Look for everyday opportunities to bring up sex, sexuality, and relationship issues. Talk openly and directly about sexuality. This teaches your child that it is okay to ask you questions.



## **Sexual abuse**

Talk to your child about sexuality and sexual abuse.

- Teach your child that some body parts are private. Private parts of the body are those parts that a bathing suit covers.
- Let your child know that no one should touch or look at private body parts unless it is to provide care.
- Make sure your child understands that if someone tries to touch or look at private body parts, you should be told. And if someone tries to show their own private parts to your child, you or a trusted adult should be told right away.
- Let your child know that no one has the right to touch them anywhere without their permission.
- Let your child know it is okay to talk about anything.

When you empower your child to say “no” to unwanted touch and teach them that they can come to you with questions and concerns, you take important steps to prevent child sexual abuse.

# Nutrition, Fitness, and Health

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All children benefit from a healthy, balanced diet and regular physical activity.

The “5210 Everyday” campaign is part of a national health promotion campaign to increase healthy eating and active living.

It’s simple and easy to remember.

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## **Eat 5 fruits and vegetables every day**

- Fruits and vegetables provide vitamins and minerals that are important for growth and development in children.
- Try new fruits and vegetables multiple times.

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## **Keep recreational screen time to 2 hours or less every day**

- Too much screen time has been linked to obesity, lower reading scores, and attention problems.
- Keep TVs and computers out of your child’s bedroom.
- Turn the TV off during mealtime.

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## **Include at least 1 hour or more of active play every day**

- Regular exercise is an important part of a healthy life.
- Have fun outside.
- Take a family walk or bike ride.
- Take part in an organized sport such as youth baseball, soccer, or swimming.

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## **Sugar-sweetened drinks**

- Cut out sugar-sweetened drinks.
- Choose non-fat milk products.
- Drink more water every day.

### **Eat healthy**

- Eat meals as a family
- Offer a wide variety of healthy foods
- Don't keep junk food in the house
- Keep healthy snacks on hand
- Choose low-fat milk
- Drink water instead of sugary juices or soda
- Choose frozen yogurt over ice cream

### **Healthy meals and snacks**

Generally, kids should eat a healthy meal or snack about every three hours.

Nutritious meals have a variety of foods from these food groups: cereals and breads, fruits and vegetables, meats and milk. Include fruits and vegetables at every meal.

Avoid struggles about what and how much your child eats. Don't insist that your child eat some of each food served at a meal or sitting. Instead, offer a variety of healthy choices at each meal. This way your child will get healthy nutrition over time. Your child also will build decision-making skills. Provide small portions. Give seconds if your child is still hungry.

### ***Healthy lunch ideas***

- Hummus and pita chips
- Sliced veggies
- A banana or other fruit
- Low-fat yogurt cup

- Hard boiled eggs
- Trail mix with dried fruit
- Celery sticks and peanut butter
- Low-fat pudding cup

- A sandwich on whole-grain bread with lean meat and cheese or peanut butter and low-sugar jam
- An apple or other fruit
- Baby carrots with yogurt dip

### *Healthy snacks*

- Apple slices or celery with peanut butter
- Unsweetened applesauce cups
- Baby carrots and yogurt dip
- Pretzels and grapes
- Popcorn
- Small servings of crackers with cheese
- Cheese stick
- Frozen yogurt or a yogurt cup
- Fruit cups with juice
- Low-fat pudding



## **Fitness**

Adding physical activity into your child's daily routine sets the foundation for a lifetime of fitness and good health.

School-age children need at least an hour a day of physical activity. Most of the hour should be either moderate or vigorous aerobic activity.

Encourage active free play such as jumping rope, shooting baskets, or just running around outside. Video games that involve high-intensity dancing, virtual sports, or other types of movement can be a fun way to keep kids active.

Get creative as you search for activities your child enjoys. Go on a nature hike, take family bike rides, visit indoor climbing walls, walk to the library, or turn on your child's favorite music and dance in the living room!

Exercise with your child to better your own health while you model good exercise habits.

Adding physical activity to your child's daily routine sets the foundation for a lifetime of fitness and good health.

### ***Protect your child during activities***

- Make sure your child wears the right protection for their activities. Depending on the activity, your child may need a helmet, protective pads, or protective eyewear.
- Your child should wear a helmet when riding a bike, rollerblading, skateboarding, sledding, skiing, or snowboarding.
- Teach your child to swim. However, even if your child has had swimming lessons or is able to swim, you still need to supervise closely.
- Even if a child uses a life jacket or a life preserver, an adult should be nearby at all times when kids are in or near water.

**Children who wear helmets lower their risk of serious head injury by about 85 percent.**

## Children's sports

Organized sports are a great way to stay fit. But team sports or dance classes aren't the only choices. With your support, chances are a few sports may spark your child's interest.

As children get older, their vision, attention spans, and specific skills, such as throwing for distance, improve. They're also better able to follow directions.

Consider organized activities such as:

- T-ball, softball, or baseball
- Soccer
- Gymnastics
- Swimming
- Tennis
- Martial arts

### Contact sports

When deciding on sports participation, consider age, maturity, and physical size.

Are the physical contact, aggressiveness, and competition involved developmentally appropriate for your child? Will your child enjoy it?

Because children enter puberty at different ages, there can be dramatic physical differences among children of the same sex — particularly boys.

Focus on learning the fundamentals of sports. Stay positive and support your child if they feel smaller than their peers. Children grow and develop rapidly during this period, and things can change quickly.

### *Sports specialization*

Do not encourage early specialization in a single sport. Focusing on one sport can prevent your child from testing other skills and playing other enjoyable sports. Focusing on one sport only can also lead to stress, burnout, and injury.

Whether your child swims, runs track, or bikes around the neighborhood, remember the long-term goal — a lifetime of physical activity.

## Healthy body image

A healthy body image is an important part of a growing child's self-esteem.

Girls tend to struggle with body image issues more than boys. This may be because girls often face significant pressure to be physically attractive. However, boys can be affected too.

Factors that might harm a child's body image include:

- Natural weight gain and other changes as puberty gets closer.
- Peer pressure to look a certain way.
- Media images that promote thinness in girls and hyper-masculinity in boys.
- Having a parent who is overly concerned about their own weight or appearance or their child's weight or appearance.

Here are some tips to use when you talk about body image with your child. You want your child to be comfortable with their body shape and to relate to food in a healthy way.

- **Talk about media messages.** Television programs, movies, music videos, websites, magazines, and even some toys may send your child the message that only a certain body type is okay.
- **Use positive language.** Rather than talking about "fat" and "thin," encourage your child to focus on eating a healthy diet. Support staying physically active. Discourage family and friends from using hurtful nicknames. Discourage jokes about people who are overweight or have a large body frame.
- **Establish healthy eating habits.** Offer healthy meals and snacks, but let your child make choices about the food they eat.
- **Encourage physical activity.** Taking part in sports and other physical activities — particularly those that don't emphasize a particular weight or body shape — can help promote good self-esteem and a positive body image.
- **Set a good example.** Remind your child that you exercise and eat a healthy diet for your health, not just to look a certain way.

It's not easy to develop and maintain a healthy body image. If your child struggles with a negative body image, please talk to your health care provider.

## Sleep

Adequate sleep is important for a growing child, especially on school nights.

- Aim for 9-11 hours of sleep each night.
- Keep a regular bedtime routine.
- Plan a quiet time of at least 30 minutes before bedtime.
- Children in this age range take about 15 to 30 minutes to fall asleep.

## Screen time

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting older children's recreational screen time to no more than two hours a day.

Too much screen time has been linked to obesity, sleep issues, and behavioral problems. It also links to lowered academic performance and less time for active play.

### *How to limit screen time*

Start monitoring screen time. Talk to your child about the importance of sitting less and moving more. Also, explain screen-time rules. Tell your child what will happen if they are broken.

Take simple steps to reduce screen time:

- Eliminate background TV.
- Keep TVs and computers out of your child's bedroom.
- Don't eat in front of the TV.
- Set school-day rules.
- Set a good example. Be a good role model by limiting the time you spend "plugged in."

## Teeth and dental care

- Permanent teeth replace baby teeth during middle childhood.
- Limit sugary food in your child's diet to help prevent tooth decay and cavities.
- Avoid or limit soft drinks. They provide calories but no nutritional value.
- Regular soda is high in sugar and acid. Diet soda is high in acid. Both sugar and acid weaken tooth enamel. Soda contains ingredients that interfere with the body's absorption of calcium. Calcium builds strong bones and teeth.
- Schedule regular dental appointments for your child.
- Use toothpaste with fluoride and have your child brush at least twice daily. Encourage flossing at bedtime.
- Talk to your health care provider if your child does not drink water with fluoride. Fluoride strengthens tooth enamel, the hard outer coating on teeth. It helps repair early damage to teeth.

## Prevention of illness

School-age children are at greater risk for illness than older children and adults.

### *Lessen the risk of illness*

- Teach your child to wash their hands often, especially before eating and after using the toilet.
- Create a smoke-free environment. Children breathe in smoke whenever someone around them smokes. This causes them to be at increased risk for serious health problems. These include ear infections, asthma, upper respiratory infections, and other respiratory problems such as pneumonia.

### *Get your child immunized against disease*

- Attend all scheduled well-child appointments. Keep your child's immunizations up to date.
- Schedule your child for a yearly flu (influenza) vaccine. It is best to do this as soon as the vaccine is available each year.
- Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine is recommended starting at age 9. The vaccine results in a better immune response at this age as compared to giving it later in life.
- If you have concerns about vaccines, please talk to your health care provider.



# Safety Concerns

Around age eight, children begin to separate from their parents or guardians. They may not want to obey rules. They may do daring things—even while they tell you that they won't do those things. And they'll look to their friends for approval.

Knowing all of that, your child can still learn safety rules. You should enforce those rules as often as you can.

*Most injuries can be prevented.* Ask your health care provider for resources about this.

## Child safety seats

Car crashes are a great danger to your child's life and health. The crushing forces to your child's brain and body can cause severe injuries or death. This can happen in an accident or sudden stop, even at low speeds.

**For these reasons, your child must be in an approved child safety seat or booster seat at all times when in a vehicle.** Taking your child out of a car seat or booster seat too early greatly increases the risk of injury or death in a motor vehicle accident.

Keep your child in a forward-facing car seat with a harness for as long as possible. Go up to the highest weight or height allowed by the car seat manufacturer.

All children whose weight or height is above the forward-facing limit for their car seat should use an approved booster seat. Use the seat until they are 4 feet 9 inches tall and between 8 and 12 years old.

**The safest place for all children, at any age, is in the back seat. The middle of the back seat is the safest place of all.**

If you have questions or would like more information about your child's safety seat, contact the passenger safety program at \_\_\_\_\_.

**Never put a child safety seat in the front seat.**

Never leave your child alone in a vehicle.

Be a good role model and always wear your seatbelt.

## Motorized recreational vehicles

Children in this age group often do not have the strength, reaction time, or judgment to safely operate or ride motorized recreational vehicles. The risk of injury to children in this age group due to ATV use is especially high.

However, many parents allow their children to operate or ride motorized vehicles.

You may decide to buy motorized vehicles for your child or allow your child to ride as a passenger on an all terrain vehicle (ATV) or snowmobile. If you do so, be sure you research the regulations and safety guidelines for children aged seven to ten. And be sure your child wears a helmet.

## Protect your child from sunburn

Most of a person's lifetime sun exposure comes during childhood. To reduce cancer risk, limit sun exposure and sunburns.

Dress your child in clothing that covers their body and a hat that offers protection from sunburn.

At least 30 minutes before sun exposure, apply sunblock made for children. Use a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 all over the body. This includes areas underneath clothing.

- Remember to apply sunblock to sensitive areas such as cheekbones, nose, and tops of ears and feet. Reapply frequently.
- Apply lip balm that has sunblock.
- If possible, avoid the sun from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

### General safety skills to teach your child

#### *How to dial 911 and other important numbers*

Teach your child how to dial 911. Go over the information your child will need to give to an emergency dispatcher:

- Name
- Address and phone number
- What happened

Be sure your child knows your number and other family members' numbers. Practice saying important phone numbers and addresses until your child has them memorized.

Post the **Poison Control Center** phone number where your entire family can find it: 1 (800) 222-1222.

## Fire safety

This is a good time to be sure you have smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors on every level of your home and near all sleeping areas. Check the batteries every month. Change the batteries at least once a year on a date you will remember, such as when daylight savings time begins or on your child's birthday.

Have fire extinguishers handy throughout your home, especially in the kitchen and in the garage.

Your child is the perfect age to learn about fire safety and practice your family's fire plan. Teach your child to crawl under the smoke and to "stop, drop, and roll" if clothes catch fire. Talk with your child about how to leave a burning building safely.

### Make and practice your fire plan.

Be sure your child knows what to do if there is a fire in your house. The idea is to get outside quickly and safely.

Keep the plan simple:

- Teach your child when to open a door if they think there may be a fire. If a door or doorknob is hot to the touch, **do not open the door**. If there is smoke coming in from cracks under or around the door, **do not open the door**. If there's a window your child can use to get out, they should do that. If that's not possible, the child should open the window and stand in front of it until help arrives.
- Teach your child that if they see or smell smoke or fire they should stay low to the ground and to exit your house as quickly as possible. Smoke rises, so tell your child to crawl on hands and knees to stay below the smoke.
- Let your child know that the most important thing is to get out of the house safely and quickly. Do not stay in the house to call 911 or to get a favorite toy or pet.
- Decide on a meeting place where your child should go and wait once they are out of the house. You might choose the porch of a neighbor's house or some other nearby spot.
- Practice. Have a fire drill at home. See how fast everyone can safely get out of the house. Do this at least twice a year.

# A Final Word

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Enjoy your child during this time. Give your child your time, attention, and unconditional love.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this information or anything concerning your child, contact your health care provider. Together, you will help your child thrive and be healthy.



# Notes

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## BARBARA WOODWARD LIPS PATIENT EDUCATION CENTER

Mrs. Lips, a resident of San Antonio, Texas, was a loyal Mayo Clinic patient of more than 40 years and a self-made business leader who significantly expanded her family's activities in oil, gas and ranching. Upon her death in 1995, Mrs. Lips paid the ultimate compliment by leaving her entire estate to Mayo Clinic. By naming the Barbara Woodward Lips Patient Education Center, Mayo honors her generosity, her love of learning, her belief in patient empowerment and her dedication to high-quality care.

*This material is for your education and information only. This content does not replace medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. New medical research may change this information. If you have questions about a medical condition, always talk with your health care provider.*

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MC5354-10rev0917